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# THE NEW TEMPLE SHAKESPEARE



Edited by M. R. Ridley, M.A.



# KING LEAR

by William Shakespeare



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## Editor's General Note

**The Text.** The editor has kept before him the aim of presenting to the modern reader the nearest possible approximation to what Shakespeare actually wrote. The text is therefore conservative, and is based on the earliest reliable printed text. But to avoid distraction (*a*) the spelling is modernised, and (*b*) a limited number of universally accepted emendations is admitted without comment. Where a Quarto text exists as well as the First Folio the passages which occur only in the Quarto are enclosed in square brackets [ ] and those which occur only in the Folio in brace brackets { }.

**Scene Division.** The rapid continuity of the Elizabethan curtainless production is lost by the 'traditional' scene divisions. Where there is an essential difference of place these scene divisions are retained. Where on the other hand the change of place is insignificant the scene division is indicated only by a space on the page. For ease of reference, however, the 'traditional' division is retained at the head of the page and in line numbering.

**Notes.** Passages on which there are notes are indicated by a † in the margin.

**Punctuation** adheres more closely than has been usual to the 'Elizabethan' punctuation of the early texts. It is often therefore more indicative of the way in which the lines were to be delivered than of their syntactical construction.

**Glossaries** are arranged on a somewhat novel principle, not alphabetically, but in the order in which the words or phrases occur. The editor is much indebted to Mr J. N. Bryson for his collaboration in the preparation of the glossaries.





## Preface

**The Text.** The problem of the text of *King Lear* is at once fascinating and intricate, and the proper discussion of it would require disproportionate space, and in any case be of a nature out of place in this edition. But some brief remarks on certain aspects of it appear to be needed to justify, if possible, the somewhat unusual text of the play here given. The first Quarto appeared in 1608, with the following title-page :

“ M. William Shak-speare : / HIS / True Chronicle Historie of  
the life and / death of King LEAR and his three / Daughters. / *With  
the vnfortunate life of Edgar, sonne / and heire to the Earle of Gloster,*  
and his / sullen and assumed humor of / TOM of Bedlam : *As it  
was played before the Kings Maiestie at Whitehall vpon / S. Stephans  
night in Christmas Holidayes. / By his Maiesties seruants playing  
vsually at the Gloabe / on the Bancke-side.* [Device.] LONDON,  
/ Printed for Nathaniel Butter, and are to be sold at his shop in  
Pauls / Church-yard at the signe of the Pide Bull neere / St. Austins  
Gate. 1608.”

The second Quarto also bears the date 1608, but it has been conclusively proved that it was printed in 1619. Like other later quartos it introduces some emendations, and some fresh blunders. It has no independent authority, and need not occupy us further.

There are twelve extant copies of the first Quarto, and only two of these are identical. This is because alterations were made while the sheets were being printed, and the sheets were then indiscriminately sorted for binding, so that each copy contains one or more uncorrected sheets with the balance of what are ordinarily described as ‘corrected’ sheets. This first Quarto is generally

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accepted as one of the 'good' quartos,<sup>1</sup> in the sense that it is not a botch, like the first Quarto of *Hamlet* ; but from the typographical point of view it could hardly be worse. It has been described as "perhaps the very worst specimen of the printer's craft that ever issued from the Press." It makes a number of obvious blunders, it prints a good deal of verse as prose, and even where it prints passages which look to the eye like verse the line-division is almost uniformly incorrect. Nevertheless, when, with the rather dubious assistance of the corrected sheets, or the often more relevant assistance of the Folio, we have cured some of the errors, and when we have sorted out the lines, we have a text which, though it contains still some desperate passages, is yet reasonably complete, and clearly in close relation to an original manuscript.

We have two main problems, first the relation between the uncorrected and the 'corrected' sheets of the Quarto, second the relation between the Quarto and the Folio. The use of the word 'corrected' in this connection appears to me to be misleading, suggesting as it does that the corrector was correcting the printed sheet from the MS. If I write

*and the chains clanked on the reechoing stones*

and an unhappy compositor, misreading 'cl' as 'd' and 'n' as 'u' and also being altogether defeated by my bad writing of 'reechoing' sets that as

*and the chains dauked on the reeching stones*

he has clearly created a corrupt passage. If a proof reader now

<sup>1</sup> But Sir Edmund Chambers thinks that its characteristics point to a 'reported' text, perhaps by shorthand rather than memorisation.

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gets to work and changes 'dauked' to 'rang' and 'reeching' to 'reeking,' and (for scansion) 'on' to 'upon,' we have

*and the chains rang upon the reeking stones.*

The proof reader has achieved a line which scans and makes sense; but he is not in any proper sense of the word 'correcting'; he is heroically emending, without reference to the MS. or consideration of what the *ductus literarum* of the MS. is likely to have been. Now some at least of the 'corrections' of the altered sheets of the Quarto are of exactly this type. For example in III. iv. 6 the uncorrected sheet reads *this crulentious storme*; the other sheet reads *this tempestious storm*; that is all very well, but whatever it was in the MS. that was misread as *crulentious* could hardly be correctly read as *tempestious*. Similarly with II. ii. 122, *ausrent* changed to *miscreant*; and perhaps clearest of all, II. i. 100, *these—and wast of this his* changed to *the wast and spoyle of his*. That the alterations in the 'corrected' sheets do often in fact give the correct reading of the MS. there can be little doubt; but there seems to me very little evidence that they were at all universally arrived at by a consultation of the MS. And, if they were not, we are more likely to be near to what Shakespeare wrote when we are looking at the efforts of a stupidly honest compositor struggling with a writing which he could not read than if we rely upon an ingenious emender.

As to the relation between the Folio and the Quarto, the most notable difference is that the Folio omits nearly three hundred lines which are found in the Quarto, and includes about one hundred lines which are not found in the Quarto. There is a great number of differences of reading, but of these a very high proportion are what might be called 'indifferent,' such things as *should I for I should, would the reposall for could the repose*, and so on.

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Sometimes the Folio makes what appear to be certainly valid corrections of the Quarto, sometimes it introduces new errors of its own. Some of its alterations appear to be mere matters of the smoothing out of roughnesses. For example, in II. iv. 119 the Quarto reads simply, and with vigorous brevity, *O my heart my heart* whereas the Folio makes a polished line of it, *O me, my heart, my rising heart; but down*. Or, a very clear case, in V. iii. 154, Q reads *Or with this paper shall I stople it*; this is a perfectly good line, but the Folio, presumably to avoid the somewhat colloquial though vigorous word *stople*, reads the awkward *Or with this paper shall I stop it; hold Sir*. Or again III. vii. 58, 63, where F reads the ordinary *stick* and *stern* for Q's less usual *rash* and *dearne*. Such alterations as these seem to be unmistakably the result of a deliberate 'editorial' process. Now if one could feel in the least certain that the differences in the Folio represented either the original MS. itself, or a revision of his original MS. by Shakespeare himself, the problem would be a simple one; one would take the Folio text as it stands. But it is difficult to imagine Shakespeare making such a number of insignificant verbal alterations. And it is at least clear that in some cases the Folio is in a close relation to the MS. from which the Quarto was printed. To revert to the three instances of Quarto 'corrections': where the uncorrected Quarto reads *crulentious* and the 'corrected' reads *tempestious* the Folio reads *contentious*; where the uncorrected Quarto reads *auxrent* and the 'corrected' *miscreant* the Folio reads *ancient*; where the uncorrected Quarto gives up in despair and reads *these* —and *wast of this bis*, emended to *the wast and spoyle of his*, the Folio reads *th' expence and wast of his*. Clearly, in these cases at least, the Folio compositor either succeeded in reading the MS. which the Quarto compositor had misread, or he had a better transcript

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of a common original, or he had a copy of the Quarto which had been corrected not by conjecture but from the MS., or he was emending with a due regard for probabilities, or, conceivably, he had a new and revised MS. If we are to pay attention to the analogy of other plays for which we have both Quarto and Folio we should expect the Folio to be printed from the Quarto, and there is indeed some evidence which points to F having been set from a copy of Q which contained uncorrected sheets E, H, and K, a view which one would readily accept if it were not that the amount of alteration and insertion needed to convert Q into copy from which F could be set is uncomfortably large. My own guess would be that F was set from a better transcript of a common original than that which was available for Q. In any event the transcript or the corrected copy of Q embodies a considerable amount of careful editorial work, in punctuation (Q hardly recognises any stop stronger than a comma except a rare full-stop), in lineation (Q being almost uniformly mislineated), and in general 'polishing.' And I can see no sufficient reason to assume that the Folio, immeasurably superior though it is from the typographical point of view, can be given the authority of an independent and superior text. But of one thing one can, I think, be quite sure, that the 'accepted' text of the play is a conflation which makes the worst of both worlds and has no authority whatever. To give one instance of many: in IV. vi. 165 the Quarto reads *Through tatter'd rags small vices do appear* whereas the Folio reads *Through tatter'd clothes great vices do appear*. It is clear that from the point of view of the required sense *small* is right and *great* wrong, and the editors naturally take the Quarto reading; but for some unintelligible reason they prefer the Folio's clothes to the Quarto's rags. And there is another worse instance of the same arbitrary procedure

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in I. ii. 167-74. The Folio has *go armed* in line 172 at the end of a speech of which the Quarto omits all but the first three words; but it does not repeat the injunction in line 174. The Quarto, not having it in line 172, gives it in line 174. But the 'accepted' text, with damnable iteration and no authority, gives it in both places.

The usual procedure has been to accept the Folio text as verbally the basis, but to adopt some three hundred readings from the Quarto, not at all because the Folio was specifically corrupt or unintelligible but merely because the Quarto reading there seemed 'preferable,' and to incorporate from the Quarto all the passages which the Folio omits. The text here given is based verbally upon the Quarto; wherever, that is, the Quarto appears to give tolerable sense it has been allowed to stand, even at the cost of incomplete lines and other roughnesses. Where the Quarto appeared hopeless readings have been admitted from the Folio or from later editors; and considerations of space preclude the indication of all such cases in the notes; but the licence has been used as sparingly as possible. The significant omissions of both texts are indicated. The passages which occur only in the Quarto are marked by square brackets [ ]. The passages which occur only in the Folio are enclosed in brace brackets { }.

**Date of Composition.** The earliest notice which we have of the play is an entry in the Stationers' Registers under the date 26th of November 1607: "Nathanael Butter John Busby Entred for their copie under thandes of Sir George Buck knight and Thwardens A Booke called . Master William Shakespeare his historye of Kinge Lear as yt was played before the Kinges maiestie at Whitehall vppon Sainct Stephens night at Christmas Last, by his maiesties servantes, playinge vsually at the Globe on

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the Banksyde." It is clear therefore that it was written before the end of December 1606. It is also practically certain that it was written after March 1603, since on the 16th of that month there was entered in the Registers a book by one Samuel Harsnett, called "A Declaration of Egregious Popishe Impostures . . .", and there can be little reasonable doubt that Shakespeare drew on this book for the names of the devils mentioned by poor Tom,<sup>1</sup> and not much more doubt that he was drawing on his recollection of it in several other passages in the play.

Between those two limits there can be no certainty, though there has been much vigorous conjecture. Malone was confident that the play was first acted in March or April 1605, because a Simon Stafford entered on the 8th of May, and later in the year published, "The True Chronicle History of King Leir and his three Daughters, Gonorill, Ragan, and Cordella. As it hath been diuers and sundry times lately acted"; and Malone supposed that he did so in the hope of selling his inferior wares under cover of the popularity of the Shakespearean drama on the same subject. Fleay supported Malone. Aldis Wright, on the other hand, with equal confidence argued for a later date, on the ground that the remarks about eclipses (I. ii. 104, 138, 143) were suggested by the great eclipse of October 1605; and Mr F. S. Boas goes so far as to say that "the reference to 'these late eclipses' *must* have been suggested by the great eclipse of the sun of October 1605, preceded by an eclipse of the moon in September": a remark which is of value only as an illustration of the positiveness of unfounded statement into which even a very critical scholar may sometimes be decoyed. Even if Shakespeare were incapable of thinking about eclipses unless there had been eclipses shortly before he wrote, there had been pairs of

<sup>1</sup> The names of the fiends are throughout the text given in Harsnett's spelling.



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eclipses in 1598 and 1601, and he might have contrived to remember them if he had been writing *King Lear* in 1603. In the upshot we have to be content with the two fixed dates, admitting a certain probability that a play to be performed before the King's majesty ~~was~~ more likely to be a new play than one which had been before the public for a year and a half.

**Sources of the Plot.** The story of King Lear and his three daughters is to be found, in full or in summary, in many writers from Geoffrey of Monmouth downwards, in Wace's *Brut d'Angleterre* and Layamon's *Brut*, in Robert of Gloucester, Manning, Trevisa, and others. But it is natural to suppose that Shakespeare's direct debt was to versions of the story by writers nearer to his own time. He would find it in Holinshed, whom he used so much, in *The Faerie Queene*, and in an old play. In Holinshed we have the three daughters Gonorilla, Regan, and Cordeilla. Lear's question to them is to determine not an immediate division of the kingdom, but the succession after his death. The answers are much as in Shakespeare. The two elder daughters are then, not previously, married to the Dukes of Cornwall and Albany; and "one of the princes of Gallia," who has not been in England, but has heard of Cordeilla, asks for her hand and marries her though dowerless. The Dukes revolt against Lear and deprive him of his kingdom, arranging that he is "to live after a rate assigned to him for the maintenance of his estate." His daughters "seemed to thinke that all was too much which their father had, the same being neuer so little: in so much, that going from the one to the other, he was brought to that miserie, that scarslie they would allow him one seruant to waite vpon him." Lear then goes over to France, and is welcomed by Cordeilla and her husband, who fit out an expedi-

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tion, cross to England, defeat and kill the Dukes, and restore Lear to his kingdom. He rules for two years, dies a natural death, and is succeeded by Cordeilla.

Spenser's account (*The Faerie Queene*, II. x. 27-32) is a brief summary of Holinshed, but the division of the kingdom has been arranged before the question and answers (as in Shakespeare), and the youngest daughter's name appears for the first time in its Shakespearean form.

As to the old play, we have seen that Simon Stafford entered in May of 1605, and published later in the same year (with a title slightly differing from that under which he entered it) a play on the subject of King Leir and his three daughters. This play is extant. It is probably, though by no means certainly, the same as a book, of which no copies are known to be extant, entered by Edward White in May of 1594, "The moste famous Chronicle historye of Leire kinge of England and his Three Daughters." The question of the identity of the two works is only of importance if we are assuming for Shakespeare's play a date prior to 1606 or the end of 1605. In this play, as in Shakespeare, but not in the other accounts, Lear contemplates not only the division of his kingdom, but his own immediate abdication of power; as in Shakespeare, the French king comes in person to England to see Cordelia; the courtier Perillus is without much doubt the original of Kent; and there is a fair number of passages of which we catch interesting and I think unmistakable verbal echoes in *King Lear*.

For his sub-plot Shakespeare turned to Sidney's *Arcadia*, in which is related "The pitifull state, and story of the Paphlagonian vnkinde kinge, and his kind sonne, first related by the son, then by the blind father." Two princes of Galicia take refuge from a storm in a cave. Here they "perceived an aged man, and a young, scarcelie

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come to the age of a man, both poorly arrayed, extreemely weather-beaten ; the olde man blind, the young man leading him : and yet through all those miseries, in both there seemed to appeare a kind of noblenesse, not sutable to that affliction." After listening to them for a while the princes show themselves, and the young man tells them, "this old man (whom I leade) was lately rightfull Prince of this countrie of *Papblagonia*, by the hard-hearted ungratefulnesse of a sonne of his, deprived, not onely of his kingdome . . . but of his sight. . . . Whereby, and by other his unnaturall dealings, he hath bene driven to such grieffe, as even now he would have had me to have led him to the top of this rocke, thence to cast himselfe headlong to death." The old man then explains that his son, to spare his feelings, has told only part of the tale, that the son who had blinded him was a bastard, who by his schemes had turned his father against his legitimate son.

**Duration of Action.** After Act I., scene ii., there is clearly an interval of something less than a fortnight. For the rest, the action moves in a series of continuous 'blocks.' Whether between some of these there is or is not to be imagined the interval of a day or two seems to be of minor importance for the appreciation of the dramatic effect of the play. In any case I think that Daniel's ten days can probably be shortened to seven, as follows :

- Day 1. I. i., ii.
- Day 2. I. iii.-v.
- Day 3. II. i., ii.
- Day 4. II. iii., iv., and III.
- Day 5. IV. i., ii.
- Day 6. IV. iii.-vi.
- Day 7. IV. vii., and V.

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**Criticism.** Of all Shakespeare's plays *King Lear* is, by common consent, the most 'tremendous.' It has not the bitter and sometimes almost intolerable tension of *Othello*, nor perhaps the purely poetic power of *Macbeth*, but it is overwhelming in its impact, and seems at times to transcend the limits of the dramatic form. It is Shakespeare's cry *De profundis*, from the lowest circle of the black depths. It is not here a particular manifestation of evil that oppresses him; the whole universe has fallen in ruins about him; and our suspense is not only for Lear. *Fractus illabitur orbis*, and can even Shakespeare remain unshaken as the fragments strike him? And it is perhaps for this reason that in *King Lear* alone of all Shakespeare's plays we are conscious of a sense that even his gigantic powers are strained to their last limit. In all the others, though not indeed in all with the 'angelic strength' which he shows in *Antony and Cleopatra*, he is in complete control of himself and of his medium; in *King Lear* we feel that the control is maintained only with an agonising effort. And in this 'Titanic' nature of the play lies, I think, the reason for two points of technique which differentiate it sharply from the other tragedies. In the others the 'relief,' the change of emotional key, which is provided by nurse or grave-diggers or clown or porter or old man, has at least its 'comic' side. There is no relief of that kind in *King Lear*; the change of key would be too violent. But there is relief of a different kind, when the fool allows us momentarily to relax from tragedy to pathos. Further, the conclusion of *King Lear* differs from that of the other tragedies. In them the tragic climax is reached with the death of the main figure, and we descend to ordinary life in company with the minor characters only. But from the terrifying sublimity of Lear's tragedy such a descent would be too abrupt, too precipitous. And in *King Lear* alone the

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main figure shares in the relaxation of tension. The tragic climax of the play is surely the moment (wherever we place it) at which Lear becomes irretrievably insane. When he enters with Cordelia in his arms he is no longer the great king in ruin ; he is an old man with his dead daughter ; he is no longer tragic, but pathetic. And it is this, I think, that makes the quiet ending of *King Lear* the most profoundly moving conclusion in Shakespearean, and perhaps in any, tragedy.

There follow some excerpts from the most famous criticisms of the play.

*Dr Johnson.*—The tragedy of *Lear* is deservedly celebrated among the dramas of Shakespeare. There is, perhaps, no play which keeps the attention so strongly fixed ; which so much agitates our passions and interests our curiosity. The artful involutions of distinct interests, the striking oppositions of contrary characters, the sudden changes of fortune, and the quick succession of events, fill the mind with a perpetual tumult of indignation, pity and hope. There is no scene which does not contribute to the aggravation of the distress or conduct of the action, and scarce a line which does not conduce to the progress of the scene. So powerful is the current of the poet's imagination, that the mind which once ventures within it, is hurried irresistibly along.

The injury done by Edmund to the simplicity of the action is abundantly recompensed by the addition of variety by the art with which he is made to co-operate with the chief design, and the opportunity which he gives the poet of combining perfidy with perfidy, and connecting the wicked son with the wicked daughters, to impress this important moral, that villainy is never at a stop, that crimes lead to crimes, and at last terminate in ruin. But,

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though this moral be incidentally enforced, Shakespeare has suffered the virtue of Cordelia to perish in a just cause, contrary to the natural ideas of justice, to the hope of the reader, and, what is yet more strange, to the faith of chronicles. . . . A play in which the wicked prosper, and the virtuous miscarry, may doubtless be good, because it is a just representation of the common events of human life ; but, since all reasonable beings naturally love justice, I cannot easily be persuaded that the observation of justice makes a play worse ; or that, if other excellencies are equal, the audience will not always rise better pleased from the final triumph of persecuted virtue.

In the present case the publick has decided. Cordelia, from the time of Tate, has always retired with victory and felicity. And, if my sensations could add anything to the general suffrage, I might relate, that I was many years ago so shocked by Cordelia's death, that I know not whether I ever endured to read again the last scenes of the play till I undertook to revise them as an editor.

*Lamb.*—So to see Lear acted—to see an old man tottering about the stage with a walking stick, turned out of doors by his daughters in a rainy night—has nothing in it but what is painful and disgusting. We want to take him into shelter and relieve him. That is all the feeling which the acting of Lear ever produced in me. But the Lear of Shakespeare cannot be acted. The contemptible machinery by which they mimic the storm which he goes out in, is not more inadequate to represent the horrors of the real elements than any actor can be to represent Lear ; they might more easily propose to personate the Satan of Milton upon a stage, or one of Michael Angelo's terrible figures. The greatness of Lear is not in corporal dimension, but in intellectual : the explosions of his

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passion are terrible as a volcano : they are storms turning up and disclosing to the bottom that sea, his mind, with all its vast riches. It is his mind which is laid bare. This case of flesh and blood seem too insignificant to be thought on ; even as he himself neglects it. On the stage we see nothing but corporal infirmities and weakness, the impotence of rage ; while we read it, we see not Lear, but we are Lear—we are in his mind, we are sustained by a grandeur which baffles the malice of daughters and storms ; in the aberrations of his reason, we discover a mighty irregular power of reasoning, immethodised from the ordinary purposes of life, but exerting its powers, as the wind blows where it listeth, at will upon the corruptions and abuses of mankind. What have looks, or tones, to do with that sublime identification of his age with that of the *heavens themselves*, when, in his reproaches to them for conniving at the injustice of his children, he reminds them that ' they themselves are old ' ? What gesture shall we appropriate to this ? What has the voice or the eye to do with such things ? But the play is beyond all art, as the tamperings with it show ; it is too hard and stony ; it must have love-scenes and a happy ending. It is not enough that Cordelia is a daughter, she must shine as a lover too. Tate has put his hook into the nostrils of this Leviathan, for Garrick and his followers, the showmen of the scene, to draw the mighty beast about more easily. A happy ending !—as if the living martyrdom that Lear had gone through—the flaying of his feelings alive, did not make a fair dismissal from the stage of life the only decorous thing for him. If he is to live and be happy after, if he could sustain this world's burden after, why all this pudder and preparation—why torment us with all this unnecessary sympathy ? As if the childish pleasure of getting his gilt robes and sceptre again could tempt him to act over again his misused

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station—as if at his years, and with his experience, anything was left but to die.

Lear is essentially impossible to be represented on a stage.

*Hazlitt.*—We wish that we could pass this play over and say nothing about it. All that we can say must fall far short of the subject; or even of what we ourselves conceive of it. To attempt to give a description of the play itself or of its effect upon the mind, is mere impertinence: yet we must say something.—It is, then the best of all Shakespear's plays, for it is the one in which he was the most in earnest. He was here fairly caught in the web of his own imagination. The passion which he has taken as his subject is that which strikes its root deepest into the human heart; of which the bond is the hardest to be unloosed; and the cancelling and tearing to pieces of which gives the greatest revulsion to the frame. This depth of nature, this force of passion, this tug and war of the elements of our being, this firm faith in filial piety, and the giddy anarchy and whirling tumult of the thoughts at finding this prop failing it, the contrast between the fixed, immovable basis of natural affection, and the rapid, irregular starts of imagination, suddenly wrenched from all its accustomed holds and resting-places in the soul, this is what Shakespear has given, and what nobody else but he could give. So we believe.—The mind of Lear staggering between the weight of attachment and the hurried movements of passion is like a tall ship driven about by the winds, buffeted by the furious waves, but that still rides above the storm, having its anchor fixed in the bottom of the sea; or it is like the sharp rock circled by the eddying whirlpool that foams and beats against it, or like the solid promontory pushed from its basis by the force of an earthquake.



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*Keats.*—

Goneril. *You see how full of changes his age is.*

Act I., Scene i.

How finely is the brief of Lear's character sketched in this conference—from this point does Shakespeare spur him out to the mighty grapple—"the seeded pride that hath to this maturity blowne up" Shakespeare doth scatter abroad on the winds of Passion, where the germs take buoyant root in stormy Air, suck lightning sap, and become voiced dragons—self-will and pride and wrath are taken at a rebound by his giant hand and mounted to the Clouds—there to remain and thunder evermore.

*Bradley.*—*King Lear* has again and again been described as Shakespeare's greatest work, the best of his plays, the tragedy in which he exhibits most fully his multitudinous powers; and if we were doomed to lose all his dramas except one, probably the majority of those who know and appreciate him best would pronounce for keeping *King Lear*.

Yet this tragedy is certainly the least popular of the famous four. The 'general reader' reads it less often than the others, and, though he acknowledges its greatness, he will sometimes speak of it with a certain distaste. It is also the least often presented on the stage, and the least successful there. And when we look back on its history we find a curious fact. Some twenty years after the Restoration, Nahum Tate altered *King Lear* for the stage, giving it a happy ending, and putting Edgar in the place of the King of France as Cordelia's lover. From that time Shakespeare's tragedy in its original form was never seen on the stage for a century and a half. Betterton acted Tate's version; Garrick acted it and Dr

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Johnson approved it. Kemble acted it, Kean acted it. In 1823 Kean, 'stimulated by Hazlitt's remonstrances and Charles Lamb's essays,' restored the original tragic ending. At last, in 1838, Macready returned to Shakespeare's text throughout.

What is the meaning of these opposite sets of facts? Are the lovers of Shakespeare wholly in the right; and is the general reader and playgoer, were even Tate and Dr Johnson, altogether in the wrong? I venture to doubt it. When I read *King Lear* two impressions are left on my mind, which seem to answer roughly to the two sets of facts. *King Lear* seems to me Shakespeare's greatest achievement, but it seems to me *not* his best play. And I find that I tend to consider it from two rather different points of view. When I regard it strictly as a drama, it appears to me, though in certain parts overwhelming, decidedly inferior as a whole to *Hamlet*, *Othello* and *Macbeth*. When I am feeling that it is greater than any of these, and the fullest revelation of Shakespeare's power, I find I am not regarding it simply as a drama, but am grouping it in my mind with works like the *Prometheus Vincit* and the *Divine Comedy*, and even with the greatest symphonies of Beethoven and the statues in the Medici Chapel.

Pros. (aside) *I had forgot that foul conspiracy  
Of the beast Caliban and his confederates  
Against my life : the minute of their plot  
Is almost come. (to the Spirits) Well done ! avoid ; no more.*

Fer. *This is strange ; your father's in some passion  
That works him strongly.*

Mir. *Never till this day  
Saw I him touch'd with anger so distemper'd*

Pros. *You do look, my son, in a moved sort,*

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*As if you were dismay'd : be cheerful, sir.  
Our revels . . .*

And then, after the famous lines, follow these :

*Sir, I am vex'd :  
Bear with my weakness ; my old brain is troubled ;  
Be not disturb'd with my infirmity ;  
If you be pleased, retire into my cell  
And there repose : a turn or two I'll walk,  
To still my beating mind.*

We seem to see here the whole mind of Shakespeare in his last years. That which provokes in Prospero first a 'passion' of anger, and, a moment later, that melancholy and mystical thought that the great world must perish utterly and that man is but a dream, is the sudden recollection of gross and apparently incurable evil in the 'monster' whom he had tried in vain to raise and soften, and in the monster's human confederates. It is this, which is but the repetition of his earlier experience of treachery and ingratitude, that troubles his old brain, makes his mind 'beat,' and forces on him the sense of unreality and evanescence in the world and the life that are haunted by such evil. Nor, though Prospero can spare and forgive, is there any sign to the end that he believes the evil curable either in the monster, the 'born devil,' or in the more monstrous villains, the 'worse than devils,' whom he so sternly dismisses. But he has learned patience, has come to regard his anger and loathing as a weakness or infirmity, and would not have it disturb the young and innocent. And so, in the days of *King Lear*, it was chiefly the power of 'monstrous' and apparently

## PREFACE

cureless evil in the 'great world' that filled Shakespeare's soul with horror, and perhaps forced him sometimes to yield to the infirmity of misanthropy and despair, to cry 'No, no; no life,' and to take refuge in the thought that this fitful fever is a dream that must soon fade into a dreamless sleep; until, to free himself from the perilous stuff that weighed upon his heart, he summoned to his aid his 'so potent art,' and wrought this stuff into the stormy music of his greatest poem, which seems to cry,

*You heavens, give me that patience, patience I need,*

and, like the *Tempest* seems to preach to us from end to end, "Thou must be patient," "Bear free and patient thoughts."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The above quotation is reprinted from A. C. Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy* by permission of the Publishers, Messrs Macmillan & Co.

## Addendum

Professor Duthie, in his recent edition of the play, advances a most interesting theory to explain the peculiarities of the Q text. It is, briefly, that Q is the result of a memorial reconstruction, made by the actors *as a body* (the original prompt-book having been temporarily mislaid), and dictated by them to a scribe. I find the theory almost wholly convincing. It accounts, as no other theory that I know of does, for all the main features of Q, the mislineation, the auditory errors, and in particular that general level of Q which distinguishes it from other, probably "reported," texts. I should still be reluctant to put the authority of F as high as Professor Duthie does, since the moment one admits any "sophistication" in F (and almost all editors, including Professor Duthie, admit *some*), then, there being no method of determining the extent of the sophisticating process, the authority of F is, I think, gravely weakened. None the less, in the light of Professor Duthie's theory, and the evidence which he so ably marshals to support it, I should wish, when opportunity offers, to withdraw some of my more obstinate and unusual retentions of Q.

# THE TRAGEDY OF KING LEAR

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

LEAR, *king of Britain.*

KING OF FRANCE.

DUKE OF BURGUNDY.

DUKE OF CORNWALL.

DUKE OF ALBANY.

EARL OF KENT.

EARL OF GLOUCESTER.

EDGAR, *son to Gloucester.*

EDMUND, *bastard son to Gloucester*

CURAN, *a courtier.*

Old Man, *tenant to Gloucester.*

Doctor.

Fool.

OSWALD, *steward to Goneril.*

A captain employed by Edmund.

Gentleman attendant on Cordelia.

Herald.

Servants to Cornwall.

GONERIL,	} <i>daughters to Lear.</i>
REGAN,	
CORDELIA,	

Knights of Lear's train, Captains, Messengers, Soldiers  
and Attendants.

SCENE : *Britain.*

# THE TRAGEDY OF KING LEAR

## Act First

### SCENE I

*King Lear's palace*

*Enter Kent, Gloucester, and Edmund*

*Kent.* I thought the King had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall.

*Glo.* It did always seem so to us, but now, in the division of the kingdoms, it appears not which of the dukes he values most, for equalities are so weighed, that curiosity in neither can make choice of either's moiety.

*Kent.* Is not this your son, my lord ?

*Glo.* His breeding, sir, hath been at my charge ; I have so often blush'd to acknowledge him, that now I am  
10  
braz'd to it.

*Kent.* I cannot conceive you.

*Glo.* Sir, this young fellow's mother could, whereupon she grew round-womb'd, and had indeed, sir, a son for her cradle ere she had a husband for her bed. Do you smell a fault ?



## KING LEAR

*Kent.* I cannot wish the fault undone, the issue of it being  
so proper.

*Glo.* But I have, sir, a son by order of law, some year  
elder than this, who yet is no dearer in my account : 20  
though this knave came something saucily into the  
world before he was sent for, yet was his mother  
fair, there was good sport at his making, and the  
whoreson must be acknowledged. Do you know  
this noble gentleman, Edmund ?

*Edm.* No, my lord.

*Glo.* My lord of Kent : remember him hereafter as my  
honourable friend.

*Edm.* My services to your lordship.

*Kent.* I must love you, and sue to know you better. 30

*Edm.* Sir, I shall study deserving.

*Glo.* He hath been out nine years, and away he shall again.  
The King is coming.

*Sennet.* Enter one bearing a coronet, King Lear, Cornwall,  
Albany, Goneril, Regan, Cordelia, and Attendants

*Lear.* Attend my lords of France and Burgundy, Gloucester.

*Glo.* I shall, my liege. Exeunt Gloucester and Edmund

*Lear.* Meantime we will express our darker purposes ;

The map there. Know we have divided

In three our kingdom ; and 'tis our first intent

To shake all cares and business off our state,

Confirming them on younger years, {while we 40  
 Unburthen'd crawl toward death. Our son of Corn-  
 wall,

And you, our no less loving son of Albany,  
 We have this hour a constant will to publish  
 Our daughters' several dowers, that future strife  
 May be prevented now. The princes, France and  
 Burgundy, }

The two great princes, France and Burgundy,  
 Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love,  
 Long in our court have made their amorous sojourn,  
 And here are to be answer'd. Tell me, my daughters,  
 {Since now we will divest us both of rule, 50  
 Interest of territory, cares of state, }

Which of you shall we say doth love us most,  
 That we our largest bounty may extend  
 Where merit doth most challenge it? Goneril,  
 Our eldest-born, speak first.

*Gon.* Sir, I do love you more than words can wield the matter,  
 Dearer than eye-sight, space, or liberty,  
 Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare,  
 No less than life ; with grace, health, beauty, honour,  
 As much as child e'er loved or father found, 60  
 A love that makes breath poor and speech unable,  
 Beyond all manner of so much I love you.

## KING LEAR

*Cord.*(*aside*) What shall Cordelia do? Love, and be silent.

*Lear.*Of all these bounds, even from this line to this,  
With shady forests {and with champains rich'd,  
With plenteous rivers} and wide-skirted meads,  
We make thee lady; to thine and Albany's issue  
Be this perpetual. What says our second daughter?  
Our dearest Regan, wife to Cornwall, speak.

*Reg.* Sir, I am made 70  
Of the self-same metal that my sister is,  
And prize me at her worth; in my true heart  
I find she names my very deed of love,  
Only she came short; that I profess  
Myself an enemy to all other joys  
Which the most precious square of sense possesses, †  
And find I am alone felicitate  
In your dear highness' love.

*Cord.* (*aside*) Then poor Cordelia!  
And yet not so, since I am sure my love 's  
More richer than my tongue. 80

*Lear.*To thee and thine hereditary ever  
Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom,  
No less in space, validity, and pleasure,  
Than that confirm'd on Goneril. But now, our joy,  
Although the last, not least in our dear love. †  
What can you say to win

A third more opulent than your sisters ?

*Cord.* Nothing, my lord.

{*Lear.* Nothing !

*Cord.* Nothing. }

90

*Lear.* How ? Nothing will come of nothing : speak again.

*Cord.* Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave

My heart into my mouth : I love your majesty

According to my bond, nor more nor less.

*Lear.* Go to, go to, mend your speech a little,

Lest it may mar your fortunes.

*Cord.* Good my lord,

†

You have begot me, bred me, lov'd me : I

Return those duties back as are right fit,

Obey you, love you, and most honour you.

Why have my sisters husbands, if they say

100

They love you all ? Haply, when I shall wed,

That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry

Half my love with him, half my care and duty :

Sure, I shall never marry like my sisters,

To love my father all.

*Lear.* But goes this with thy heart ?

*Cord.* Ay, good my lord.

*Lear.* So young, and so untender ?

*Cord.* So young, my lord, and true.

*Lear.* Well, let it be so, thy truth then be thy dower,

## KING LEAR

For, by the sacred radiance of the sun,  
The mysteries of Hecat, and the night,  
By all the operation of the orbs,  
From whom we do exist and cease to be,  
Here I disclaim all my paternal care,  
Propinquity and property of blood,  
And as a stranger to my heart and me  
Hold thee from this for ever. The barbarous  
Scythian,  
Or he that makes his generation  
Messes to gorge his appetite, shall be  
As well neighbour'd, pitied and reliev'd,  
As thou my sometime daughter.

110

†

120

*Kent.*

Good my liege,—

*Lear.* Peace, Kent!

Come not between the dragon and his wrath;  
I lov'd her most, and thought to set my rest  
On her kind nursery. Hence, and avoid my sight!  
So be my grave my peace, as here I give  
Her father's heart from her! Call France; who  
stirs?

Call Burgundy. Cornwall and Albany,  
With my two daughters' dowers digest this third:  
Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her;  
I do invest you jointly in my power,

130

Pre-eminence, and all the large effects  
 That troop with majesty. Ourselves, by monthly course,  
 With reservation of an hundred knights,  
 By you to be sustain'd, shall our abode  
 Make with you by due turns ; only we still retain  
 The name and all the additions to a king ;  
 The sway, revenue, execution of the rest,  
 Beloved sons, be yours, which to confirm,  
 This coronet part betwixt you.

*Kent.* Royal Lear, 140

Whom I have ever honour'd as my king,  
 Lov'd as my father, as my master follow'd,  
 As my great patron thought on in my prayers,—

*Lear.* The bow is bent and drawn ; make from the shaft,

*Kent.* Let it fall rather, though the fork invade  
 The region of my heart : be Kent unmannerly,  
 When Lear is mad. What wilt thou do, old man ?  
 Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak,  
 When power to flattery bows ? To plainness honour's  
 bound,

When majesty stoops to folly. Reverse thy doom, 150  
 And in thy best consideration check  
 This hideous rashness : answer my life my judgement,  
 Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least ;  
 Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sound

KING LEAR

Reverbs no hollowness.

*Lear.* Kent, on thy life, no more.

*Kent.* My life I never held but as a pawn  
To wage against thy enemies, nor fear to lose it,  
Thy safety being the motive.

*Lear.* Out of my sight !

*Kent.* See better, Lear, and let me still remain

The true blank of thine eye.

160

*Lear.* Now, by Apollo,—

*Kent.* Now, by Apollo, king,

Thou swear'st thy gods in vain.

*Lear.* Vassal ! recreant !

*Laying his hand on his sword*

{*Alb.*}  
{*Corn.*} Dear sir, forbear. }

*Kent.* Do ;

Kill thy physician, and the fee bestow  
Upon the foul disease ; revoke thy doom,  
Or, whilst I can vent clamour from my throat,  
I'll tell thee thou dost evil.

*Lear.* Hear me,

On thy allegiance, hear me !  
Since thou hast sought to make us break our vow, 170  
Which we durst never yet, and with stray'd pride  
To come between our sentence and our power,

Which nor our nature nor our place can bear,  
 Our potency made good, take thy reward ; †  
 Four days we do allot thee, for provision  
 To shield thee from diseases of the world,  
 And on the fifth to turn thy hated back  
 Upon our kingdom : if on the tenth day following  
 Thy banish'd trunk be found in our dominions,  
 The moment is thy death. Away ! By Jupiter, 180  
 This shall not be revok'd.

*Kent.* Why, fare thee well, king, since thus thou wilt appear,  
 Friendship lives hence, and banishment is here.

(*to Cordelia*) The gods to their protection take thee,  
 maid,

That rightly thinks and hast most justly said !

(*to Regan and Goneril*) And your large speeches may  
 your deeds approve,

That good effects may spring from words of love.

Thus Kent, O princes, bids you all adieu ;

He 'll shape his old course in a country new. *Exit*

*Flourish.* Re-enter Gloucester, with France, Burgundy,  
 and Attendants

*Glo.* Here 's France and Burgundy, my noble lord. 190

*Lear.* My lord of Burgundy,

We first address towards you, who with a king  
 Hath rivall'd for our daughter, what, in the least,



## KING LEAR

Will you require in present dower with her,  
Or cease your quest of love ?

*Bur.* Royal majesty,  
I crave no more than what your highness offer'd,  
Nor will you tender less.

*Lear.* Right noble Burgundy,  
When she was dear to us, we did hold her so ;  
But now her price is fall'n. Sir, there she stands :  
If aught within that little seeming substance, 200  
Or all of it, with our displeasure picc'd,  
And nothing else, may fitly like your grace,  
She's there, and she is yours.

*Bur.* I know no answer.

*Lear.* Sir, will you, with those infirmities she owes,  
Unfriended, new adopted to our hate,  
Cover'd with our curse and stranger'd with our oath,  
Take her, or leave her ?

*Bur.* Pardon me, royal sir,  
Election makes not up on such conditions.

*Lear.* Then leave her, sir, for, by the power that made me,  
I tell you all her wealth. (*to France*) For you, great  
king, 210  
I would not from your love make such a stray,  
To match you where I hate ; therefore beseech you  
To avert your liking a more worthier way

Than on a wretch whom nature is ashamed  
Almost to acknowledge hers.

*Fra.* This is most strange,  
That she, that even but now was your best object,  
The argument of your praise, balm of your age,  
Most best, most dearest, should in this trice of time  
Commit a thing so monstrous, to dismantle  
So many folds of favour. Sure, her offence      220  
Must be of such unnatural degree  
That monsters it, or your fore-vouch'd affections  
Fall'n into taint; which to believe of her,  
Must be a faith that reason without miracle  
Could never plant in me.

*Cord.* I yet beseech your majesty,—  
If for I want that glib and oily art,  
To speak and purpose not, since what I well intend,  
I'll do 't before I speak,—that you make known  
It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness,  
No unclean action, or dishonour'd step,      230  
That hath depriv'd me of your grace and favour;  
But even for want of that for which I am rich,  
A still-soliciting eye, and such a tongue  
As I am glad I have not, though not to have it  
Hath lost me in your liking.

*Lear.* Go to, go to. Better thou

## KING LEAR

Hadst not been born than not to have pleas'd me  
better.

*Fra.* Is it no more but this, a tardiness in nature  
That often leaves the history unspoke  
That it intends to do? My lord of Burgundy,  
What say you to the lady? Love is not love 240  
When it is mingled with respects that stands  
Aloof from the entire point. Will you have her?  
She is herself and dower. †

*Bur.* Royal Lear,  
Give but that portion which yourself propos'd,  
And here I take Cordelia by the hand,  
Duchess of Burgundy.

*Lear.* Nothing; I have sworn. {I am firm}

*Bur.* I am sorry then you have so lost a father  
That you must lose a husband.

*Cord.* Peace be with Burgundy!  
Since that respects of fortune are his love, 250  
I shall not be his wife.

*Fra.* Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich being poor,  
Most choice forsaken, and most lov'd despis'd,  
Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon;  
Be it lawful I take up what's cast away.  
Gods, gods! 'tis strange, that from their cold'st neglect  
My love should kindle to inflam'd respect.

Thy dowerless daughter, king, thrown to my chance,  
 Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France :  
 Not all the dukes in waterish Burgundy 260  
 Shall buy this unpriz'd precious maid of me.  
 Bid them farewell, Cordelia, though unkind :  
 Thou losest here, a better where to find.

*Lear.* Thou hast her, France, let her be thine, for we  
 Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see  
 That face of hers again. Therefore be gone,  
 Without our grace, our love, our benison.  
 Come, noble Burgundy.

*Flourish. Exeunt all but France,  
 Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia*

*Fra.* Bid farewell to your sisters.

*Cord.* The jewels of our father, with wash'd eyes †  
 Cordelia leaves you : I know you what you are ; 271  
 And, like a sister, am most loath to call  
 Your faults as they are nam'd. Use well our father :  
 To your professed bosoms I commit him :  
 But yet, alas, stood I within his grace,  
 I would prefer him to a better place.  
 So farewell to you both.

*Reg.* Prescribe not us our duties.

*Gon.* Let your study  
 Be to content your lord, who hath receiv'd you

KING LEAR

At fortune's alms. You have obedience scanted, 280

And well are worth the worth that you have wanted. †

*Cord.* Time shall unfold what pleated cunning hides,

Who covers faults, at last shame them derides.

Well may you prosper !

*Fra.*

Come, fair Cordelia.

*Exeunt France and Cordelia*

*Gon.* Sister, it is not a little I have to say of what most  
nearly appertains to us both. I think our father will  
hence to-night.

*Reg.* That 's most certain, and with you ; next month  
with us.

*Gon.* You see how full of changes his age is ; the observa- 290  
tion we have made of it hath not been little : he  
always loved our sister most ; and with what poor  
judgement he hath now cast her off appears too gross.

*Reg.* 'Tis the infirmity of his age : yet he hath ever but  
slenderly known himself.

*Gon.* The best and soundest of his time hath been but rash ;  
then must we look to receive from his age not alone  
the imperfection of long ingrafted condition, but  
therewithal unruly waywardness, that infirm and  
choleric years bring with them. 300

*Reg.* Such unconstant starts are we like to have from him  
as this of Kent's banishment.

*Gon.* There is further compliment of leave-taking between France and him. Pray let's hit together: if our father carry authority with such dispositions as he bears, this last surrender of his will but offend us.

*Reg.* We shall further think on't.

*Gon.* We must do something, and i' the heat. *Exeunt*

SCENE II

*The Earl of Gloucester's castle*

*Enter Edmund, with a letter*

*Edm.* Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law  
My services are bound. Wherefore should I  
Stand in the plague of custom, and permit  
The curiosity of nations to deprive me,  
For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines  
Lag of a brother? Why bastard? wherefore base?  
When my dimensions are as well compact,  
My mind as generous, and my shape as true,  
As honest madam's issue, why brand they us  
With base, base bastardy?  
Who in the lusty stealth of nature take  
More composition and fierce quality  
Than doth within a stale, dull, tired bed,

10

## KING LEAR

Go to the creating a whole tribe of fops,  
Got 'tween a sleep and wake. Well then,  
Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land :  
Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund,  
As to the legitimate : {fine word, 'legitimate' :}  
Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed,  
And my invention thrive, Edmund the base 20  
Shall top the legitimate. I grow, I prosper, †  
Now gods stand up for bastards !

*Enter Gloucester*

*Glo.* Kent banish'd thus, and France in choler parted,  
And the king gone to-night, subscrib'd his power,  
Confin'd to exhibition ; all this done  
Upon the gad ! Edmund, how now, what news ?

*Edm.* So please your lordship, none.

*Putting up the letter*

*Glo.* Why so earnestly seek you to put up that letter ?

*Edm.* I know no news, my lord.

*Glo.* What paper were you reading ? 30

*Edm.* Nothing, my lord.

*Glo.* No ? What needs then that terrible dispatch of it  
into your pocket ? the quality of nothing hath not  
such need to hide itself. Let 's see : come, if it be  
nothing, I shall not need spectacles.

*Edm.* I beseech you, sir, pardon me, it is a letter from my

brother, that I have not all o'er-read ; for so much  
as I have perus'd, I find it not fit for your liking.

*Glo.* Give me the letter, sir.

*Edm.* I shall offend either to detain or give it ; the con- 40  
tents, as in part I understand them, are to blame.

*Glo.* Let 's see, let 's see.

*Edm.* I hope, for my brother's justification, he wrote this  
but as an essay, or taste of my virtue.

*Glo.* (*reads*) ' This policy {and reverence} of age makes  
the world bitter to the best of our times, keeps our  
fortunes from us till our oldness cannot relish them ;  
I begin to find an idle and fond bondage in the  
oppression of aged tyranny, who sways not as it hath  
power, but as it is suffer'd. Come to me, that of this 50  
I may speak more. If our father would sleep till I  
wak'd him, you should enjoy half his revenue for  
ever, and live the belov'd of your brother EDGAR.'  
Hum ! Conspiracy !—' slept till I wak'd him, you  
should enjoy half his revenue ! '—My son Edgar !  
Had he a hand to write this, a heart and brain to  
breed it in ? When came this to you, who brought  
it ?

*Edm.* It was not brought me, my lord, there's the  
cunning of it ; I found it thrown in at the casement 60  
of my closet.



## KING LEAR

*Glo.* You know the character to be your brother's ?

*Edm.* If the matter were good, my lord, I durst swear it were his, but, in respect of that, I would fain think it were not.

*Glo.* It is his ?

*Edm.* It is his hand, my lord, but I hope his heart is not in the contents.

*Glo.* Hath he never heretofore sounded you in this business ?

70

*Edm.* Never, my lord, but I have often heard him maintain it to be fit, that, sons at perfect age, and fathers declining, his father should be as ward to the son, and the son manage the revenue.

*Glo.* O villain, villain ! His very opinion in the letter ! Abhorred villain, unnatural, detested, brutish villain, worse than brutish ! Go, sir, seek him, ay, apprehend him, abominable villain ! Where is he ?

*Edm.* I do not well know, my lord. If it shall please you to suspend your indignation against my brother till you can derive from him better testimony of this intent, you should run a certain course, where, if you violently proceed against him, mistaking his purpose, it would make a great gap in your own honour, and shake in pieces the heart of his obedience. I dare

80

pawn down my life for him, he hath wrote this to feel my affection to your honour, and to no further pretence of danger.

*Glo.* Think you so ?

90

*Edm.* If your honour judge it meet, I will place you where you shall hear us confer of this, and by an auricular assurance have your satisfaction, and that without any further delay than this very evening.

*Glo.* He cannot be such a monster—

[*Edm.* Nor is not, sure.

*Glo.* To his father, that so tenderly and entirely loves him. Heaven and earth !] Edmund, seek him out, wind me into him, I pray you, frame your business after your own wisdom. I would unstate myself to be in 100 a due resolution.

*Edm.* I shall seek him, sir, presently, convey the business 11 I shall see means, and acquaint you withal.

*Glo.* These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us : though the wisdom of nature can reason thus and thus, yet nature finds itself scourg'd by the sequent effects : love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide : in cities, mutinies ; in countries, discords ; in palaces, treason ; the bond crack'd between son and father. {This villain of mine 110 comes under the prediction ; there's son against

## KING LEAR

father : the king falls from bias of nature ; there 's father against child. We have seen the best of our time : machinations, hollowness, treachery and all ruinous disorders follow us disquietly to our graves.} Find out this villain, Edmund ; it shall lose thee nothing ; do it carefully. And the noble and true-hearted Kent banish'd ! his offence, honest ! Strange, strange !

*Exit*

*Edm.* This is the excellent foppery of the world, that when 120 we are sick in fortune—often the surfeit of our own behaviour—we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon and the stars : as if we were villains by necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves and treacherers by spherical predominance, drunkards, liars and adulterers by an enforc'd obedience of planetary influence, and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on : an admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition to the charge of stars ! My father com- 130 pounded with my mother under the dragon's tail, and my nativity was under Ursa major ; so that it follows, I am rough and lecherous. Fut, I should have been that I am, had the maidenliest star of the firmament twinkled on my bastardy. [*Edgar—*]

*Enter Edgar*

And out he comes like the Catastrophe of the old †  
 comedy: my cue is villanous melancholy, with a  
 sigh like Tom o' Bedlam. O, these eclipses do  
 portend these divisions! {fa, sol, la, mi.}

*Edg.* How now, brother Edmund? what serious con- 140  
 templation are you in?

*Edm.* I am thinking, brother, of a prediction I read this  
 other day, what should follow these eclipses.

*Edg.* Do you busy yourself about that?

*Edm.* I promise you, the effects he writ of succeed un-  
 happily; [as of unnaturalness between the child  
 and the parent, death, dearth, dissolutions of ancient  
 amities, divisions in state, menaces and maledic-  
 tions against king and nobles, needless diffidences,  
 banishment of friends, dissipation of cohorts, nuptial 150  
 breaches, and I know not what.

*Edg.* How long have you been a sectary astronomical?

*Edm.* Come, come;] when saw you my father last?

*Edg.* Why, the night gone by.

*Edm.* Spake you with him?

*Edg.* Two hours together.

*Edm.* Parted you in good terms? Found you no dis-  
 pleasure in him by word or countenance?

*Edg.* None at all.

KING LEAR

*Edm.* Bethink yourself wherein you may have offended 160  
him, and at my entreaty forbear his presence till  
some little time hath qualified the heat of his dis-  
pleasure, which at this instant so rageth in him that  
with the mischief of your person it would scarcely  
allay.

*Edg.* Some villain hath done me wrong.

*Edm.* That's my fear. {I pray you, have a continent  
forbearance till the speed of his rage goes slower,  
and, as I say, retire with me to my lodging, from  
whence I will fitly bring you to hear my lord speak : 170  
pray ye, go ; there's my key : if you do stir abroad,  
go arm'd.

*Edg.* Arm'd, brother ! }

*Edm.* Brother, I advise you to the best : [go arm'd :] I  
am no honest man if there be any good meaning  
towards you : I have told you what I have seen  
and heard, but faintly, nothing like the image  
and horror of it : pray you, away !

*Edg.* Shall I hear from you anon ?

*Edm.* I do serve you in this business. *Exit Edgar* 180

A credulous father, and a brother noble, †  
Whose nature is so far from doing harms  
That he suspects none, on whose foolish honesty  
My practices ride easy, I see the business.

Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit :  
 All with me 's meet that I can fashion fit. *Exit*

SCENE III

*The Duke of Albany's palace*

*Enter Goneril and Oswald, her steward*

*Gon.* Did my father strike my gentleman for chiding of his  
 fool ?

*Osw.* Yes, madam.

*Gon.* By day and night he wrongs me ; every hour  
 He flashes into one gross crime or other,  
 That sets us all at odds : I 'll not endure it :  
 His knights grow riotous, and himself upbraids us  
 On every trifle. When he returns from hunting,  
 I will not speak with him ; say I am sick :  
 If you come slack of former services,  
 You shall do well ; the fault of it I 'll answer.

10

*Osw.* He 's coming, madam, I hear him. *Horns within*

*Gon.* Put on what weary negligence you please,  
 You and your fellow servants ; I 'ld have it come in  
 question :

If he dislike it, let him to our sister,  
 Whose mind and mine, I know, in that are one,

## KING LEAR

[Not to be over-rul'd. Idle old man,  
That still would manage those authorities  
That he hath given away ! Now, by my life,  
Old fools are babes again, and must be us'd 20  
With checks as flatteries, when they are seen abus'd.] †  
Remember what I tell you.

*Osw.*

Very well, madam.

*Gon.* And let his knights have colder looks among you ;  
What grows of it, no matter ; advise your fellows so :  
[I would breed from hence occasions, and I shall,  
That I may speak :] I'll write straight to my sister,  
To hold my very course. Go, prepare for dinner.

*Exeunt*

### SCENE IV

*A hall in the same*

*Enter Kent, disguised*

*Kent.* If but as well I other accents borrow,  
That can my speech defuse, my good intent  
May carry through itself to that full issue  
For which I raz'd my likeness. Now, banish'd Kent,  
If thou canst serve where thou dost stand condemn'd,  
{So may it come,} thy master whom thou lovest  
Shall find thee full of labour.

*Horns within. Enter Lear, Knights, and Attendants*

*Lear.* Let me not stay a jot for dinner; go get it ready.

*(exit an Attendant.)* How now, what art thou?

*Kent.* A man, sir.

10

*Lear.* What dost thou profess? What wouldst thou with us?

*Kent.* I do profess to be no less than I seem, to serve him truly that will put me in trust, to love him that is honest, to converse with him that is wise and says little, to fear judgement, to fight when I cannot choose, and to eat no fish.

*Lear.* What art thou?

*Kent.* A very honest-hearted fellow, and as poor as the king.

*Lear.* If thou be as poor for a subject as he is for a king, thou art poor enough. What wouldst thou?

20

*Kent.* Service.

*Lear.* Who wouldst thou serve?

*Kent.* You.

*Lear.* Dost thou know me, fellow?

*Kent.* No, sir; but you have that in your countenance which I would fain call master.

*Lear.* What's that?

*Kent.* Authority.

*Lear.* What services canst do?

30

*Kent.* I can keep honest counsel, ride, run, mar a curious



## KING LEAR

tale in telling it, and deliver a plain message bluntly ;  
that which ordinary men are fit for, I am qualified in,  
and the best of me is diligence.

*Lear.* How old art thou ?

*Kent.* Not so young to love a woman for singing, nor so  
old to dote on her for any thing : I have years on my  
back forty eight.

*Lear.* Follow me, thou shalt serve me ; if I like thee  
no worse after dinner, I will not part from thee 40  
yet. Dinner, ho, dinner ! Where 's my knave, my  
fool ? Go you and call my fool hither.

*Exit an Attendant*

*Enter Oswald*

You, sirrah, where 's my daughter ?

*Osw.* So please you,— *Exit*

*Lear.* What says the fellow there ? Call the clotpole back.  
(*exit a Knight.*) Where 's my fool, ho ? I think the  
world 's asleep.

*Re-enter Knight*

How now, where 's that mongrel ?

*Kni.* He says, my lord, your daughter is not well.

*Lear.* Why came not the slave back to me when I call'd 50  
him ?

*Kni.* Sir, he answer'd me in the roundest manner, he  
would not.

*Lear.* 'A would not ?

*Kni.* My lord, I know not what the matter is ; but, to my judgement, your highness is not entertain'd with that ceremonious affection as you were wont ; there's a great abatement appears as well in the general dependants as in the duke himself also and your daughter.

60

*Lear.* Ha ! sayest thou so ?

*Kni.* I beseech you pardon me, my lord, if I be mistaken ; for my duty cannot be silent when I think your highness wrong'd.

*Lear.* Thou but rememberest me of mine own conception : I have perceiv'd a most faint neglect of late ; which I have rather blam'd as mine own jealous curiosity than as a very pretence and purport of unkindness : I will look further into 't. But where's this fool ? I have not seen him this two days.

70

*Kni.* Since my young lady's going into France, sir, the fool hath much pin'd away.

*Lear.* No more of that, I have noted it. Go you and tell my daughter I would speak with her. (*exit an Attendant.*) Go you, call hither my fool.

*Exit an Attendant*

*Re-enter Oswald*

O, you sir, you sir, come you hither, who am I, sir ?

KING LEAR

*Osw.* My lady's father.

*Lear.* My lady's father? my lord's knave, you whoreson  
dog, you slave, you cur!

*Osw.* I am none of this, my lord, I beseech you pardon me. 80

*Lear.* Do you bandy looks with me, you rascal?

*Striking him*

*Osw.* I'll not be struck, my lord.

*Kent.* Nor tripp'd neither, you base foot-ball player.

*Tripping him up*

*Lear.* I thank thee, fellow; thou serv'st me, and I'll love  
thee.

*Kent.* Come, sir, I'll teach you differences: away, away!  
If you will measure your lubber's length again, tarry:  
but away! {go to;} you have wisdom? {so.}

*Pushes Oswald out*

*Lear.* Now, friendly knave, I thank thee: there's earnest  
of thy service.

*Giving Kent money* 90

*Enter Fool*

*Fool.* Let me hire him too; here's my coxcomb.

*Offering Kent his cap*

*Lear.* How now, my pretty knave, how dost thou?

*Fool.* Sirrah, you were best take my coxcomb.

*Kent.* Why, fool?

*Fool.* Why, for taking on's part that's out of favour:  
nay, an thou canst not smile as the wind sits,

thou'lt catch cold shortly ; there, take my cox-comb ; why, this fellow hath banished two on's daughters, and done the third a blessing against his will ; if thou follow him, thou must needs 100 wear my coxcomb. How now, nuncle ? Would I had two coxcombs and two daughters !

*Lear.* Why, my boy ?

*Fool.* If I gave them all my living, I'd keep my cox-combs myself. There's mine ; beg another of thy daughters.

*Lear.* Take heed, sirrah ; the whip.

*Fool.* Truth is a dog that must to kennel, he must be whipp'd out, when Lady the brach may stand by †  
the fire and stink. 110

*Lear.* A pestilent gall to me ! †

*Fool.* Sirrah, I'll teach thee a speech.

*Lear.* Do.

*Fool.* Mark it, uncle :

Have more than thou showest,  
Speak less than thou knowest,  
Lend less than thou owest,  
Ride more than thou goest,  
Learn more than thou trowest,  
Set less than thou throwest ;  
Leave thy drink and thy whore,

120

## KING LEAR

And keep in-a-door,  
And thou shalt have more  
Than two tens to a score.

*Kent.* This is nothing, fool.

*Fool.* Then 'tis like the breath of an unfee'd lawyer, you  
gave me nothing for 't. Can you make no use of  
nothing, uncle ?

*Lear.* Why, no, boy ; nothing can be made out of nothing.

*Fool.* *(to Kent)* Prithee, tell him, so much the rent of his 130  
land comes to ; he will not believe a fool.

*Lear.* A bitter fool !

*Fool.* Dost know the difference, my boy, between a bitter  
fool and a sweet fool ?

*Lear.* No, lad ; teach me.

[*Fool.* That lord that counsell'd thee  
To give away thy land,  
Come place him here by me ;  
Do thou for him stand :  
The sweet and bitter fool  
Will presently appear ;  
The one in motley here,  
The other found out there.

140

*Lear.* Dost thou call me fool, boy ?

*Fool.* All thy other titles thou hast given away ; that thou  
wast born with.

*Kent.* This is not altogether fool, my lord.

*Fool.* No, faith, lords and great men will not let me ; if  
I had a monopoly on't, they would have part on't :  
and ladies too, they will not let me have all the fool 150  
to myself ; they 'll be snatching.] Give me an  
egg, nuncle, and I 'll give thee two crowns.

*Lear.* What two crowns shall they be ?

*Fool.* Why, after I have cut the egg in the middle and  
eat up the meat, the two crowns of the egg ; when  
thou clovest thy crown i' the middle and gavest  
away both parts, thou borest thine ass on thy back  
o'er the dirt : thou hadst little wit in thy bald  
crown when thou gavest thy golden one away. If  
I speak like myself in this, let him be whipp'd that 160  
first finds it so.

(*singing*) Fools had ne'er less wit in a year ;

For wise men are grown foppish,  
They know not how their wits do wear,  
Their manners are so apish.

*Lear.* When were you wont to be so full of songs, sirrah ?

*Fool.* I have us'd it, nuncle, ever since thou madest thy  
daughters thy mother : for when thou gavest them  
the rod and putst down thine own breeches,

(*singing*) Then they for sudden joy did weep, 170  
And I for sorrow sung,

## KING LEAR

That such a king should play bo-peep,

And go the fools among.

Prithee, nuncle, keep a schoolmaster that can teach  
thy fool to lie : I would fain learn to lie.

*Lear.* An you lie, we 'll have you whipp'd.

*Fool.* I marvel what kin thou and thy daughters are :  
they 'll have me whipp'd for speaking true, thou  
wilt have me whipp'd for lying, and sometime I  
am whipp'd for holding my peace ; I had rather be 180  
any kind of thing than a fool, and yet I would  
not be thee, nuncle ; thou hast par'd thy wit a'  
both sides and left nothing in the middle. Here  
comes one of the parings.

*Enter Goneril*

*Lear.* How now, daughter, what makes that frontlet on ?  
Methinks you are too much of late i' the frown.

*Fool.* Thou wast a pretty fellow when thou hadst no need  
to care for her frown ; now thou art an O without  
a figure : I am better than thou art now ; I am a  
fool, thou art nothing. Yes, forsooth, I will hold 190  
my tongue ; so your face bids me, though you say  
nothing.

Mum, mum :

He that keeps neither crust nor crumb,

Weary of all, shall want some.

(*pointing to Lear*) That's a sheal'd peascod.

*Gon.* Not only, sir, this, your all-licens'd fool,  
 But other of your insolent retinue,  
 Do hourly carp and quarrel, breaking forth  
 In rank and not to be endured riots. Sir, 200  
 I had thought, by making this well known unto you,  
 To have found a safe redress, but now grow fearful,  
 By what yourself too late have spoke and done,  
 That you protect this course, and put it on  
 By your allowance ; which if you should, the fault  
 Would not 'scape censure, nor the redress sleep,  
 Which, in the tender of a wholesome weal,  
 Might in their working do you that offence  
 That else were shame, that then necessity  
 Must call discreet proceeding. 210

*Fool.* For, you know, nuncle,  
 The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long,  
 That it had it head bit off by it young.  
 So out went the candle, and we were left darkling.

*Lear.* Are you our daughter ?

*Gon.* Come, sir,  
 I would you would make use of that good wisdom  
 Whereof I know you are fraught, and put away  
 These dispositions that of late transform you  
 From what you rightly are. 220



KING LEAR

*Fool.* May not an ass know when the cart draws the horse ? Whoop, Jug, I love thee.

*Lear.* Doth any here know me ? Why, this is not Lear :  
Doth Lear walk thus ? speak thus ? Where are his eyes ?

Either his notion weakens, his discernings †  
Are lethargied—Ha ! waking ? 'tis not so.  
Who is it that can tell me who I am ?

*Fool.* Lear's shadow.

[*Lear.* I would learn that ; for, by the marks of sovereignty, knowledge and reason, I should be false 230  
persuaded I had daughters.]

*Fool.* Which they will make an obedient father.]

*Lear.* Your name, fair gentlewoman ?

*Gon.* Come, sir !

This admiration is much o' the savour  
Of other your new pranks. I do beseech  
You understand my purposes aright ;  
As you are old and reverend, should be wise.  
Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires,  
Men so disorder'd, so debosh'd and bold, 240  
That this our court, infected with their manners,  
Shows like a riotous inn : epicurism and lust  
Make it more like a tavern or brothel  
Than a great palace. The shame itself doth speak

For instant remedy : be thou desir'd  
 By her, that else will take the thing she begs,  
 A little to disquantity your train,  
 And the remainder that shall still depend,  
 To be such men as may besort your age,  
 That know themselves and you.

*Lear.* Darkness, and devils ! 250

Saddle my horses, call my train together.  
 Degenerate bastard, I'll not trouble thee :  
 Yet have I left a daughter.

*Gon.* You strike my people, and your disorder'd rabble  
 Make servants of their betters.

*Enter Albany*

*Lear.* We, that too late repent's,— (*to Alb.*) [O, sir, are  
 you come ?]

Is it your will that we— Prepare my horses.  
 Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,  
 More hideous when thou show'st thee in a child  
 Than the sea-monster !

{*Alb.* Pray, sir, be patient.} 260

*Lear.*(*to Gon.*) Detested kite ! thou liest.

My train are men of choice and rarest parts,  
 That all particulars of duty know,  
 And in the most exact regard support  
 The worships of their name. O most small fault,

KING LEAR

How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show !  
That, like an engine, wrench'd my frame of nature  
From the fix'd place, drew from my heart all love  
And added to the gall. O Lear, Lear,  
Beat at this gate, that let thy folly in 270

*Striking his head*

And thy dear judgement out ! Go, go, my people,  
*Alb.* My lord, I am guiltless, as I am ignorant  
{Of what hath mov'd you.}

*Lear.* It may be so, my lord.

Hark, Nature, hear, dear goddess !  
Suspend thy purpose, if thou didst intend  
To make this creature fruitful ;  
Into her womb convey sterility,  
Dry up in her the organs of increase,  
And from her derogate body never spring  
A babe to honour her ! If she must teem, 280  
Create her child of spleen, that it may live  
And be a thwart disfeatur'd torment to her, †  
Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth,  
With cadent tears fret channels in her cheeks,  
Turn all her mother's pains and benefits  
To laughter and contempt, that she may feel  
How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is  
To have a thankless child ! Go, go, my people ! *Exit*

*Alb.* Now, gods that we adore, whereof comes this ?

*Gon.* Never afflict yourself to know the cause, 290  
But let his disposition have that scope  
That dotage gives it.

*Re-enter Lear*

*Lear.* What, fifty of my followers at a clap,  
Within a fortnight ?

*Alb.* What is the matter, sir ?

*Lear.* I'll tell thee. (*to Gon.*) Life and death ! I am  
asham'd

That thou hast power to shake my manhood thus,  
That these hot tears, that break from me perforce,  
Should make thee worth them. Blasts and fogs  
upon thee !

The untented woundings of a father's curse †  
Pierce every sense about thee ! Old fond eyes, 300  
BewEEP this cause again, I'll pluck you out  
And cast you with the waters that you make  
To temper clay ; [yea, is't come to this ?] {ha, let it  
be so !}

Yet have I left a daughter,  
Who I am sure is kind and comfortable :  
When she shall hear this of thee, with her nails  
She'll flay thy wolfish visage. Thou shalt find  
That I'll resume the shape which thou dost think

KING LEAR

I have cast off for ever : thou shalt, I warrant thee.

*Exeunt Lear, Kent, and Attendants*

Gon. Do you mark that, my lord ? 310

Alb. I cannot be so partial, Goneril,

To the great love I bear you,—

Gon. Come, sir, no more.

(*to the Fool*) You, more knave than fool, after your  
master.

Fool. Nuncle Lear, nuncle Lear, tarry and take the fool, with

A fox, when one has caught her,

And such a daughter,

Should sure to the slaughter,

If my cap would buy a halter :

So the fool follows after. *Exit* 320

{Gon. This man hath had good counsel : a hundred  
knights !

'Tis politic and safe to let him keep

At point a hundred knights : yes, that on every dream,

Each buzz, each fancy, each complaint, dislike,

He may enguard his dotage with their powers

And hold our lives in mercy. Oswald, I say !

Alb. Well, you may fear too far.

Gon. Safer than trust too far :

Let me still take away the harms I fear,

Not fear still to be taken : I know his heart.

What he hath utter'd I have writ my sister : 330  
 If she sustain him and his hundred knights,  
 When I have show'd the unfitness,—}

*Gon.* What, Oswald, ho !

*Osw.* Here, Madam.

*Gon.* What, have you writ this letter to my sister ?

*Osw.* Yes, madam.

*Gon.* Take you some company, and away to horse,  
 Inform her full of my particular fears,  
 And thereto add such reasons of your own  
 As may compact it more. Get you gone ; 340  
 And hasten your return. (*exit Oswald.*) Now, my  
 lord,

This milky gentleness and course of yours  
 Though I dislike not, yet, under pardon,  
 You are much more attack'd for want of wisdom  
 Than prais'd for harmful mildness.

*Alb.* How far your eyes may pierce I cannot tell :  
 Striving to better, oft we mar what 's well.

*Gon.* Nay, then—

*Alb.* Well, well ; the event.

*Exeunt*

## KING LEAR

### SCENE V

*Court before the same*

*Enter Lear, Kent, and Fool*

*Lear.* Go you before to Gloucester with these letters.  
Acquaint my daughter no further with any thing you  
know than comes from her demand out of the letter.  
If your diligence be not speedy, I shall be there before  
you.

*Kent.* I will not sleep, my lord, till I have delivered your  
letter. *Exit*

*Fool.* If a man's brains were in 's heels, were 't not in  
danger of kibes ?

*Lear.* Ay, boy.

10

*Fool.* Then I prithee be merry, thy wit shall ne'er go  
slip-shod.

*Lear.* Ha, ha, ha !

*Fool.* Shalt see thy other daughter will use thee kindly,  
for though she 's as like this as a crab is like an  
apple, yet I con what I can tell.

*Lear.* Why, what canst thou tell, my boy ?

*Fool.* She 'll taste as like this as a crab doth to a crab ;  
thou canst not tell why one's nose stands i' the  
middle of his face ?

20

*Lear.* No.

*Fool.* Why, to keep his eyes on either side 's nose, that  
what a man cannot smell out 'a may spy into.

*Lear.* I did her wrong—

*Fool.* Canst tell how an oyster makes his shell ?

*Lear.* No.

*Fool.* Nor I neither, but I can tell why a snail has a  
house.

*Lear.* Why ?

*Fool.* Why, to put his head in, not to give it away to 30  
his daughters, and leave his horns without a case.

*Lear.* I will forget my nature.—So kind a father I—Be  
my horses ready ?

*Fool.* Thy asses are gone about them ; the reason why  
the seven stars are no more than seven is a pretty  
reason.

*Lear.* Because they are not eight ?

*Fool.* Yes, thou wouldst make a good fool.

*Lear.* To take 't again perforce ! Monster, ingratitude !

*Fool.* If thou wert my fool, nuncle, I 'ld have thee beaten 40  
for being old before thy time.

*Lear.* How 's that ?

*Fool.* Thou shouldst not have been old before thou hadst  
been wise.

*Lear.* O, let me not be mad, I would not be mad ; sweet  
heaven !



## KING LEAR

Keep me in temper : I would not be mad !

*Enter Gentleman*

Are the horses ready ?

*Gent.* Ready, my lord.

*Lear.* Come, boy.

*Fool.* She that is a maid now, and laughs at my departure 50  
Shall not be a maid long, except things be cut  
shorter. *Exeunt*

## Act Second

### SCENE I

*The Earl of Gloucester's castle*

*Enter Edmund and Curan, meeting*

*Edm.* Save thee, Curan.

*Cur.* And you, sir. I have been with your father, and  
given him notice that the Duke of Cornwall and  
his duchess will be here with him to-night.

*Edm.* How comes that ?

*Cur.* Nay, I know not. You have heard of the news  
abroad, I mean the whisper'd ones, for they are yet  
but ear-bussing arguments ?

*Edm.* Not I : pray you, what are they ?

*Cur.* Have you heard of no likely wars towards, 'twixt 10  
the two Dukes of Cornwall and Albany?

*Edm.* Not a word.

*Cur.* You may then in time. Fare you well, sir. *Exit*

*Edm.* The duke be here to-night? The better best;

This weaves itself perforce into my business.

My father hath set guard to take my brother,

And I have one thing of a queasy question,

Which must ask briefness and fortune's help.

Brother, a word; descend, brother, I say!

*Enter Edgar*

My father watches: O fly this place;

20

Intelligence is given where you are hid;

You have now the good advantage of the night:

Have you not spoken 'gainst the Duke of Cornwall  
ought?

He's coming hither now i' the night, i' the haste,

And Regan with him: have you nothing said

Upon his party against the Duke of Albany?

Advise your—

*Edg.* I am sure on 't, not a word.

*Edm.* I hear my father coming: pardon me:

In cunning I must draw my sword upon you,

Seem to defend yourself, now quit you well.

30

Yield: come before my father. Light, here, here!

KING LEAR

Fly, brother, fly ! Torches, torches ! So farewell.

*Exit Edgar*

Some blood drawn on me would beget opinion

*Wounds his arm*

Of my more fierce endeavour : I have seen drunkards

Do more than this in sport. Father, father !

Stop, stop ! No help ?

*Enter Gloucester, and Servants with torches*

*Glo.* Now, Edmund, where is the villain ?

*Edm.* Here stood he in the dark, his sharp sword out,

Warbling of wicked charms, conjuring the moon

To stand 's auspicious mistress.

*Glo.*

But where is he ?

40

*Edm.* Look, sir, I bleed.

*Glo.*

Where is the villain, Edmund ?

*Edm.* Fled this way, sir. When by no means he could—

*Glo.* Pursue him—Go after. (*exeunt some Servants.*) 'By  
no means ' what ?

*Edm.* Persuade me to the murder of your lordship ;

But that I told him the revengive gods

'Gainst parricides did all their thunders bend,

Spoke with how manifold and strong a bond

The child was bound to the father ; sir, in fine,

Seeing how loathly opposite I stood

To his unnatural purpose, with fell motion

50

With his prepared sword he charges home  
 My unprovided body, lanc'd mine arm :  
 But when he saw my best alarm'd spirits  
 Bold in the quarrel's rights, rous'd to the encounter,  
 Or whether gasted by the noise I made,  
 But suddenly he fled.

*Glo.* Let him fly far :

Not in this land shall he remain uncaught,  
 And found—dispatch. The noble duke my master,  
 My worthy arch and patron, comes to-night ;  
 By his authority I will proclaim it, 60  
 That he which finds him shall deserve our thanks,  
 Bringing the murderous caitiff to the stake ;  
 He that conceals him, death.

*Edm.* When I dissuaded him from his intent  
 And found him pight to do it, with curst speech  
 I threaten'd to discover him ; he replied,  
 ' Thou unpossessing bastard ! dost thou think,  
 If I would stand against thee, could the reposeure  
 Of any trust, virtue, or worth, in thee  
 Make thy words faith'd ? No : what I should deny— 70  
 As this I would, ay, though thou didst produce  
 My very character—I 'ld turn it all  
 To thy suggestion, plot, and damned pretence,  
 And thou must make a dullard of the world,

## KING LEAR

If they not thought the profits of my death  
Were very pregnant and potential spurs  
To make thee seek it.'

*Glo.* Strong and fasten'd villain !  
Would he deny his letter ? I never got him.

*Tucket within*

Hark, the duke's trumpets ! I know not why he  
comes.

All ports I'll bar, the villain shall not 'scape, 80  
The duke must grant me that : besides, his picture  
I will send far and near, that all the kingdom  
May have note of him ; and of my land,  
Loyal and natural boy, I'll work the means  
To make thee capable.

*Enter Cornwall, Regan, and Attendants*

*Corn.* How now, my noble friend ? since I came hither,  
Which I can call but now, I have heard strange news.

*Reg.* If it be true, all vengeance comes too short  
Which can pursue the offender. How dost, my lord ?

*Glo.* Madam, my old heart is crack'd, is crack'd ! 90

*Reg.* What, did my father's godson seek your life ?  
He whom my father nam'd, your Edgar ?

*Glo.* Ay, lady, lady, shame would have it hid !

*Reg.* Was he not companion with the riotous knights  
That tend upon my father ?

*Glo.* I know not, madam : 'tis too bad, too bad.

*Edm.* Yes, madam, he was {of that consort.}

*Reg.* No marvel then, though he were ill affected :

'Tis they have put him on the old man's death,  
To have the expense and waste of his revenues. 100

I have this present evening from my sister  
Been well inform'd of them, and with such cautions  
That if they come to sojourn at my house,  
I'll not be there.

*Corn.* Nor I, assure thee, Regan.

Edmund, I hear that you have shown your father  
A child-like office.

*Edm.* 'Twas my duty, sir.

*Glo.* He did betray his practice, and receiv'd

This hurt you see, striving to apprehend him.

*Corn.* Is he pursued ?

*Glo.* Ay, my good lord.

*Corn.* If he be taken, he shall never more 110

Be fear'd of doing harm : make your own purpose,  
How in my strength you please. For you, Edmund,  
Whose virtue and obedience doth this instant  
So much commend itself, you shall be ours :  
Natures of such deep trust we shall much need :  
You we first seize on.

*Edm.* I shall serve you,

## KING LEAR

Truly, however else.

*Glo.* For him I thank your grace.

*Corn.* You know not why we came to visit you,—

*Reg.* Thus out of season, threading dark-eyed night ;  
Occasions, noble Gloucester, of some poise, 120  
Wherein we must have use of your advice :  
Our father he hath writ, so hath our sister,  
Of differences, which I best thought it fit  
To answer from our home ; the several messengers  
From hence attend dispatch. Our good old friend,  
Lay comforts to your bosom, and bestow  
Your needful counsel to our business,  
Which craves the instant use.

*Glo.* I serve you, madam :  
Your graces are right welcome. *Exeunt*

## SCENE II

*Before Gloucester's castle*

*Enter Kent and Oswald, severally*

*Osw.* Good even to thee, friend, art of the house ?

*Kent.* Ay.

*Osw.* Where may we set our horses ?

*Kent.* I' the mire.

*Osw.* Prithee, if thou love me, tell me.

*Kent.* I love thee not.

*Osw.* Why then I care not for thee.

*Kent.* If I had thee in Lipsbury pinfold, I would make thee †  
care for me.

*Osw.* Why dost thou use me thus? I know thee not. 10

*Kent.* Fellow, I know thee.

*Osw.* What dost thou know me for?

*Kent.* A knave, a rascal, an eater of broken meats, a base,  
proud, shallow, beggarly, three-suited, hundred-  
pound, filthy, worsted-stocking knave, a lily-liver'd  
action-taking knave, a whoreson glass-gazing super-  
serviceable finical rogue, one trunk-inheriting slave,  
one that wouldst be a bawd in way of good service,  
and art nothing but the composition of a knave,  
beggar, coward, pandar, and the son and heir of 20  
a mongrel bitch, whom I will beat into clamorous  
whining, if thou deny the least syllable of the  
addition.

*Osw.* What a monstrous fellow art thou, thus to rail on  
one that's neither known of thee nor knows thee!

*Kent.* What a brazen-fac'd varlet art thou, to deny thou  
knowest me! Is it two days ago since I beat thee  
and tripp'd up thy heels before the king? Draw,  
you rogue, for, though it be night, the moon shines;



KING LEAR

I'll make a sop o' the moonshine a' you : draw, you †  
whoreson cullionly barber-monger, draw ! 31

*Drawing his sword*

*Osw.* Away ! I have nothing to do with thee.

*Kent.* Draw, you rascal : you bring letters against the king,  
and take Vanity the puppet's part against the royalty  
of her father : draw, you rogue, or I'll so carbonado  
your shanks—draw, you rascal, come your ways.

*Osw.* Help, ho ! murder ! help !

*Kent.* Strike, you slave, stand, rogue, stand, you neat  
slave, strike ! *Beating him*

*Osw.* Help, ho ! murder ! help ! 40

*Enter Edmund, with his rapier drawn, Cornwall, Regan,  
Gloucester, and Servants*

*Edm.* How now, what 's the matter ? *Parting them*

*Kent.* With you, Goodman boy, an you please come, I'll  
flesh you ; come on, young master.

*Glo.* Weapons ? arms ? What 's the matter here ?

*Corn.* Keep peace, upon your lives ; †

He dies that strikes again. What 's the matter ?

*Reg.* The messengers from our sister and the king.

*Corn.* What 's your difference ? speak.

*Osw.* I am scarce in breath, my lord.

*Kent.* No marvel, you have so bestirr'd your valour. You 50

cowardly rascal, nature disclaims in thee, a tailor made thee.

*Corn.* Thou art a strange fellow : a tailor make a man ?

*Kent.* Ay, a tailor, sir ; a stone-cutter or a painter could not have made him so ill, though he had been but two hours at the trade.

*Corn.* Speak yet, how grew your quarrel ?

*Osw.* This ancient ruffian, sir, whose life I have spar'd at suit of his gray beard,—

*Kent.* Thou whoreson zed, thou unnecessary letter ! My lord, if you 'll give me leave, I will tread this unbolted villain into mortar, and daub the walls of a jakes with him. Spare my gray beard, you wagtail ?

*Corn.* Peace, sir !

You beastly knave, have you no reverence ?

*Kent.* Yes, sir ; but anger has a privilege.

*Corn.* Why art thou angry ?

*Kent.* That such a slave as this should wear a sword,  
 Who wears no honesty. Such smiling rogues as these,  
 Like rats, oft bite those cords a-twain which are 70  
 Too intrinse to unloose ; smooth every passion †  
 That in the natures of their lords rebel ;  
 Bring oil to fire, snow to their colder moods,  
 Renege, affirm, and turn their halcyon beaks †  
 With every gale and vary of their masters,

## KING LEAR

Knowing nought, like dogs, but following.

A plague upon your epileptic visage !

Smoile you my speeches, as I were a fool ?

†

Goose, an I had you upon Sarum plain,

I 'ld send you cackling home to Camelot.

†

*Corn.* What, art thou mad, old fellow ?

81

*Glo.* How fell you out ? say that.

*Kent.* No contraries hold more antipathy

Than I and such a knave.

*Corn.* Why dost thou call him knave ? What 's his offence ?

*Kent.* His countenance likes me not.

*Corn.* No more perchance does mine, nor his, nor hers.

*Kent.* Sir, 'tis my occupation to be plain :

I have seen better faces in my time

Than stands on any shoulder that I see

90

Before me at this instant.

*Corn.* This is a fellow,

Who, having been prais'd for bluntness, doth affect

A saucy roughness, and constrains the garb

Quite from his nature : he cannot flatter, he,

†

He must be plain, he must speak truth !

An they will take it, so ; if not, he 's plain.

These kind of knaves I know, which in this plainness

Harbour more craft and more corrupter ends

Than twenty silly ducking observants

That stretch their duties nicely.

100

*Kent.* Sir, 'in good sooth,' or 'in sincere verity,'

'Under the allowance of your grand aspect,

Whose influence, like the wreath of radiant fire

On flickering Phœbus' front,'—

*Corn.*

What mean'st thou by this ?

*Kent.* To go out of my dialect, which you discommend

so much. I know, sir, I am no flatterer : he that

beguil'd you in a plain accent was a plain knave ;

which, for my part, I will not be, though I should

win your displeasure to entreat me to 't.

*Corn.* What 's the offence you gave him ?

110

*Os.* I never gave him any :

It pleas'd the king his master very late

To strike at me, upon his misconstruction,

When he, conjunct, and flattering his displeasure,

Tripp'd me behind ; being down, insulted, rail'd,

And put upon him such a deal of man,

That worthied him, got praises of the king

For him attempting who ~~was~~ self-subdued,

And in the fleshment of this dread exploit

Drew on me here again.

*Kent.*

None of these rogues and cowards 120

But Ajax is their fool.

*Corn.*

Bring forth the stocks ho !

## KING LEAR

You stubborn ancient knave, you reverend braggart,  
We 'll teach you—

*Kent.* I am too old to learn :  
Call not your stocks for me : I serve the king,  
On whose employments I was sent to you :  
You should do small respect, show too bold malice  
Against the grace and person of my master,  
Stocking his messenger.

*Coru.* Fetch forth the stocks ! As I have life and honour,  
There he shall sit till noon. 130

*Reg.* Till noon ! till night, my lord, and all night too.

*Kent.* Why, madam, if I were your father's dog,  
You could not use me so.

*Reg.* Sir, being his knave, I will.

*Corn.* This is a fellow of the self-same nature  
Our sister speaks of. Come, bring away the stocks !

*Stocks brought out*

*Glo.* Let me beseech your grace not to do so :  
[His fault is much, and the good king his master  
Will check him for 't : your purposed low correction  
Is such as basest and contemned'st wretches †  
For pilferings and most common trespasses 140  
Are punish'd with :] the king must take it ill,  
That he 's so slightly valued in his messenger,  
Should have him thus restrain'd.

*Corn.* I'll answer that.

*Reg.* My sister may receive it much more worse,  
To have her gentlemen abus'd, assaulted,  
[For following her affairs. Put in his legs.]

*Kent is put in the stocks*

Come, my good lord, away.

*Exeunt all but Gloucester and Kent*

*Glo.* I am sorry for thee, friend, 'tis the duke's pleasure,  
Whose disposition, all the world well knows,  
Will not be rubb'd nor stopp'd: I'll entreat for thee.

*Kent.* Pray you, do not, sir: I have watch'd and travell'd  
hard; 151

Some time I shall sleep out, the rest I'll whistle.  
A good man's fortune may grow out at heels:  
Give you good morrow!

*Glo.* The duke's to blame in this, 'twill be ill took.

*Exit*

*Kent.* Good king, that must approve the common saw,  
Thou out of heaven's benediction comest †  
To the warm sun!  
Approach, thou beacon to this under globe,  
That by thy comfortable beams I may 160  
Peruse this letter! Nothing almost sees miracles †  
But misery: I know 'tis from Cordelia,  
Who hath most fortunately been inform'd

## KING LEAR

Of my obscured course ; and shall find time †  
From this enormous state, seeking to give  
Losses their remedies. All weary and o'er-watch'd,  
Take vantage, heavy eyes, not to behold  
This shameful lodging.  
Fortune, good night : smile ; once more turn thy  
wheel ! *Sleeps*

### SCENE III

*A wood*

*Enter Edgar*

*Edg.* I heard myself proclaim'd ;  
And by the happy hollow of a tree  
Escap'd the hunt. No port is free, no place,  
That guard and most unusual vigilance  
Does not attend my taking. While I may 'scape  
I will preserve myself, and am bethought  
To take the basest and most poorest shape  
That ever penury in contempt of man  
Brought near to beast ; my face I'll grime with filth,  
Blanket my loins, elf all my hair with knots, 10  
And with presented nakedness out-face  
The wind and persecution of the sky.  
The country gives me proof and precedent

Of Bedlam beggars, who with roaring voices  
 Strike in their numb'd and mortified bare arms  
 Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary ;  
 And with this horrible object, from low farms,  
 Poor pelting villages, sheep-cotes and mills,  
 Sometime with lunatic bans, sometime with prayers,  
 Enforce their charity. Poor Turlygod ! poor Tom ! 20  
 That 's something yet : Edgar I nothing am. *Exit*

## SCENE IV

*Before Gloucester's castle. Kent in the stocks*

*Enter Lear, Fool, and Gentleman*

*Lear.* 'Tis strange that they should so depart from home,  
 And not send back my messenger.

*Gent.* As I learn'd,  
 The night before there was no purpose in them  
 Of this remove.

*Kent.* Hail to thee, noble master !

*Lear.* How ?

Makest thou this shame thy pastime ?

{*Kent.* No, my lord }

*Fool.* Ha, ha ! Look, he wears crewel garters. Horses are  
 tied by the heads, dogs and bears by the neck,





My duty kneeling, came there a reeking post, 30  
 Stew'd in his haste, half breathless, panting forth  
 From Goneril his mistress salutations ;  
 Deliver'd letters, spite of intermission,  
 Which presently they read ; on whose contents  
 They summon'd up their meiny, straight took horse,  
 Commanded me to follow, and attend  
 The leisure of their answer, gave me cold looks,  
 And meeting here the other messenger,  
 Whose welcome, I perceiv'd, had poison'd mine—  
 Being the very fellow that of late 40  
 Display'd so saucily against your highness—  
 Having more man than wit about me, drew :  
 He rais'd the house with loud and coward cries.  
 Your son and daughter found this trespass worth  
 'This shame which here it suffers.

{*Fool.* Winter's not gone yet, if the wild geese fly that way.

Fathers that wear rags

Do make their children blind ;

But fathers that bear bags

Shall set their children kind. 50

Fortune, that arrant whore,

Ne'er turns the key to the poor.

But, for all this, thou shalt have as many dolours  
 for thy daughters as thou canst tell in a year.}

## KING LEAR

*Lear.* O, how this mother swells up toward my heart !

*Hysterica passio*, down, thou climbing sorrow,

Thy element 's below ! Where is this daughter ?

*Kent.* With the earl, sir, within.

*Lear.* Follow me not, stay there.

*Exit*

*Gent.* Made you no more offence than what you speak of ? 60

*Kent.* No.

How chance the king comes with so small a train ?

*Fool.* An thou hadst been set i' the stocks for that question,  
thou hadst well deserved it.

*Kent.* Why, fool ?

*Fool.* We'll set thee to school to an ant, to teach thee  
there 's no labouring in the winter. All that follow  
their noses are led by their eyes but blind men ; and  
there 's not a nose among a hundred but can smell him  
that 's stinking. Let go thy hold when a great wheel 70  
runs down a hill, lest it break thy neck with following  
it ; but the great one that goes up the hill, let him  
draw thee after. When a wise man gives thee better  
counsel, give me mine again : I would have none but  
knaves follow it, since a fool gives it.

That sir that serves for gain,

And follows but for form,

Will pack when it begins to rain,

And leave thee in the storm.

But I will tarry, the fool will stay, 80

And let the wise man fly :

The knave turns fool that runs away :

The fool no knave, perdy.

*Kent.* Where learned you this, fool ?

*Fool.* Not i' the stocks.

*Re-enter Lear, with Gloucester*

*Lear.* Deny to speak with me ? They're sick ? they're weary ?

They travell'd hard to-night ? Mere fetches ; ay,

The images of revolt and flying off.

Fetch me a better answer.

*Glo.* My dear lord,

You know the fiery quality of the duke ; 90

How unremoveable and fix'd he is

In his own course.

*Lear.* Vengeance, death, plague, confusion !

What fiery quality ? Why, Gloucester, Gloucester,

I'd speak with the Duke of Cornwall, and his wife.

{*Glo.* Well, my good lord, I have inform'd them so.

*Lear.* Inform'd them ! Dost thou understand me, man ?}

*Glo.* Ay, my good lord.

*Lear.* The king would speak with Cornwall ; the dear father

Would with his daughter speak, commands her service : † 99

## KING LEAR

{Are they inform'd of this? My breath and blood !}  
'Fiery duke'? Tell the hot duke that Lear—  
No, but not yet; may be he is not well;  
Infirmity doth still neglect all office  
Whereto our health is bound; we are not ourselves  
When nature being oppress'd commands the mind  
To suffer with the body: I'll forbear,  
And am fall'n out with my more headier will,  
To take the indispos'd and sickly fit  
For the sound man. Death on my state! wherefore 110  
Should he sit here? This act persuades me  
That this remotion of the duke and her  
Is practice only. Give me my servant forth.  
Go tell the duke and 's wife I'll speak with them,  
Now, presently; bid them come forth and hear  
me,  
Or at their chamber-door I'll beat the drum  
Till it cry sleep to death.

*Glo.* I would have all well betwixt you. *Exit*

*Lear.* O my heart, my heart!

*Fool.* Cry to it, nuncle, as the cockney did to the eels when 120  
she put 'em i' the paste alive; she rapp'd 'em o' the  
coxcombs with a stick, and cried 'Down, wantons,  
down!' 'Twas her brother that, in pure kindness  
to his horse, buttered his hay.

*Re-enter Gloucester, with Cornwall, Regan, and Servants*

*Lear.* Good morrow to you both.

*Corn.*

Hail to your grace !

*Kent is set at liberty*

*Reg.* I am glad to see your highness.

*Lear.* Regan, I think you are ; I know what reason

I have to think so ; if thou shouldst not be glad,

I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb,

Sepulchring an adultrous. (*to Kent*) Yea, are you free ? 130

Some other time for that. Beloved Regan,

Thy sister is naught, O Regan, she hath tied

Sharp-tooth'd unkindness, like a vulture, here :

*Points to his heart*

I can scarce speak to thee, thou 'lt not believe

With how depriv'd a quality—O Regan !

*Reg.* I pray, sir, take patience : I have hope

You less know how to value her desert

Than she to slack her duty.

{*Lear.*

Say, how is that ?

*Reg.* I cannot think my sister in the least

Would fail her obligation : if, sir, perchance

140

She have restrain'd the riots of your followers,

'Tis on such ground and to such wholesome end

As clears her from all blame. }

*Lear.* My curses on her !

## KING LEAR

*Reg.* O, sir, you are old ;  
Nature in you stands on the very verge  
Of her confine ; you should be rul'd and led  
By some discretion that discerns your state  
Better than you yourself. Therefore I pray  
That to our sister you do make return ;  
Say you have wrong'd her, sir.

*Lear.* Ask her forgiveness ? 150  
Do you mark how this becomes the house :  
(*kneeling*) ' Dear daughter, I confess that I am old,  
Age is unnecessary, on my knees I beg  
That you 'll vouchsafe me raiment, bed and food.'

*Reg.* Good sir, no more ; these are unsightly tricks :  
Return you to my sister.

*Lear.* (*rising*) No, Regan :  
She hath abated me of half my train,  
Look'd black upon me, struck me with her tongue,  
Most serpent-like, upon the very heart :  
All the stor'd vengeance of heaven fall 160  
On her ingrateful top ! Strike her young bones,  
You taking airs, with lameness.

*Corn.* Fic, fic, sir !

*Lear.* You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding flames  
Into her scornful eyes, infect her beauty,  
You fen-suck'd fogs, drawn by the powerful sun,

To fall and blast her pride.

*Reg.* O the blest gods ! so will you wish on me,  
When the rash mood . . .

*Lear.* No, Regan, thou shalt never have my curse :  
Thy tender-hefted nature shall not give †  
Thee o'er to harshness ; her eyes are fierce, but thine 171  
Do comfort and not burn. 'Tis not in thee  
To grudge my pleasures, to cut off my train,  
To bandy hasty words, to scant my sizes,  
And, in conclusion, to oppose the bolt  
Against my coming in ; thou better know'st  
The offices of nature, bond of childhood,  
Effects of courtesy, dues of gratitude ;  
Thy half o' the kingdom hast thou not forgot,  
Wherein I thee endow'd.

*Reg.* Good sir, to the purpose. 180

*Lear.* Who put my man i' the stocks ? *Tucket within*

*Corn.* What trumpet's that ?

*Reg.* I know 't my sister's : this approves her letters,  
That she would soon be here.

*Enter Oswald .*

Is your lady come ?

*Lear.* This is a slave whose easy-borrow'd pride  
Dwells in the fickle grace of her he follows.  
Out, varlet, from my sight !



KING LEAR

*Corn.* What means your grace ?

*Enter Goneril*

*Gon.* Who struck my servant ? Regan, I have good hope  
Thou didst not know on 't.

*Lear.* Who comes here ? O heavens,  
If you do love old men, if your sweet sway  
Allow obedience, if yourselves are old, 190  
Make it your cause ; send down, and take my part !  
(*to Gon.*) Art not asham'd to look upon this beard ?  
O Regan, wilt thou take her by the hand ?

*Gon.* Why not by the hand, sir ? How have I offended ?  
All 's not offence that indiscretion finds  
And dotage terms so.

*Lear.* O sides, you are too-tough,  
Will you yet hold ? How came my man i' the stocks ?

*Corn.* I set him there, sir, but his own disorders  
Deserv'd much less advancement.

*Lear.* You, did you ?

*Reg.* I pray you, father, being weak, seem so. 200  
If, till the expiration of your month,  
You will return and sojourn with my sister,  
Dismissing half your train, come then to me :  
I am now from home and out of that provision  
Which shall be needful for your entertainment.

*Lear.* Return to her, and fifty men dismiss'd ?

No, rather I abjure all roofs, and choose  
 To wage against the enmity o' the air,  
 To be a comrade with the wolf and owl,—  
 Necessity's sharp pinch ! Return with her ? 210  
 Why, the hot-blood in France, that dowerless took  
 Our youngest born, I could as well be brought  
 To knee his throne, and, squire-like, pension beg  
 To keep base life afoot. Return with her ?  
 Persuade me rather to be slave and sumpter  
 To this detested groom. *Pointing at Oswald*

*Gon.*

At your choice, sir.

*Lear.* Now, I prithee, daughter, do not make me mad ;  
 I will not trouble thee, my child ; farewell :  
 We 'll no more meet, no more see one another :  
 But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter, 220  
 Or rather a disease that lies within my flesh,  
 Which I must needs call mine ; thou art a boil,  
 A plague-sore, an embossed carbuncle,  
 In my corrupted blood. But I 'll not chide thee ;  
 Let shame come when it will, I do not call it :  
 I do not bid the thunder-bearer shoot,  
 Nor tell tales of thee to high-judging Jove :  
 Mend when thou canst, be better at thy leisure ;  
 I can be patient, I can stay with Regan,  
 I and my hundred knights.

## KING LEAR

*Reg.* Not altogether so, sir : 230

I look'd not for you yet, nor am provided  
For your fit welcome. Give ear, sir, to my sister ;  
For those that mingle reason with your passion  
Must be content to think you are old, and so—  
But she knows what she does.

*Lear.* Is this well spoken now ?

*Reg.* I dare avouch it, sir : what, fifty followers ?  
Is it not well ? What should you need of more ?  
Yea, or so many, sith that both charge and danger  
Speak 'gainst so great a number ? How in a house  
Should many people under two commands 240  
Hold amity ? 'Tis hard, almost impossible.

*Gon.* Why might not you, my lord, receive attendance  
From those that she calls servants, or from mine ?

*Reg.* Why not, my lord ? If then they chanc'd to slack you.  
We could control them. If you will come to me,  
For now I spy a danger, I entreat you  
To bring but five and twenty, to no more  
Will I give place or notice.

*Lear.* I gave you all—

*Reg.* And in good time you gave it.

*Lear.* Made you my guardians, my depositaries, 250  
But kept a reservation to be follow'd  
With such a number. What, must I come to you

With five and twenty ; Regan, said you so ?

*Reg.* And speak 't again, my lord, no more with me.

*Lear.* Those wicked creatures yet do look well-favour'd,  
When others are more wicked ; not being the worst  
Stands in some rank of praise. (*to Gon.*) I 'll go with  
thee,

Thy fifty yet doth double five and twenty,  
And thou art twice her love.

*Gon.* Hear me, my lord :

What need you five and twenty, ten, or five, 260  
To follow in a house where twice so many  
Have a command to tend you ?

*Reg.* What needs one ?

*Lear.* O, reason not the need : our basest beggars  
Are in the poorest thing superfluous :  
Allow not nature more than nature needs,  
Man's life 's as cheap as beast's : thou art a lady ;  
If only to go warm were gorgeous,  
Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st,  
Which scarcely keeps thee warm. But for true need,—  
You heavens, give me that patience, patience I need ! 270  
You see me here, you gods, a poor old fellow,  
As full of grief as age, wretched in both :  
If it be you that stirs these daughters' hearts  
Against their father, fool me not too much

## KING LEAR

To bear it tamely ; touch me with noble anger,  
And let not women's weapons, water-drops,  
Stain my man's cheeks ! No, you unnatural hags,  
I will have such revenges on you both  
That all the world shall—I will do such things,—  
What they are, yet I know not, but they shall be 280  
The terrors of the earth. You think I'll weep ;  
No, I'll not weep : I have full cause of weeping,

*Storm and tempest*

But this heart shall break in a hundred thousand flaws,  
Or ere I'll weep. O fool, I shall go mad !

*Exeunt Lear, Gloucester, Kent, and Fool*

*Corn.* Let us withdraw ; 'twill be a storm.

*Reg.* This house is little, the old man and his people  
Cannot be well bestow'd.

*Gon.* 'Tis his own blame hath put himself from rest,  
And must needs taste his folly.

*Reg.* For his particular, I'll receive him gladly, 290  
But not one follower.

*Gon.* So am I purposed.

Where is my lord of Gloucester ?

*Corn.* Follow'd the old man forth : he is return'd.

*Re-enter Gloucester*

*Glo.* The king is in high rage.

{*Corn.* Whither is he going ?

*Glo.* He calls to horse ; } and will I know not whither.

*Corn.* 'Tis good to give him way ; he leads himself.

*Gon.* My lord, entreat him by no means to stay.

*Glo.* Alack, the night comes on, and the bleak winds  
Do sorely ruffle ; for many miles about  
There 's not a bush.

*Reg.* O, sir, to wilful men 300

The injuries that they themselves procure  
Must be their schoolmasters ; shut up your doors :  
He is attended with a desperate train,  
And what they may incense him to, being apt  
To have his ear abus'd, wisdom bids fear.

*Corn.* Shut up your doors, my lord, 'tis a wild night ;  
My Regan counsels well, come out o' the storm.

*Exeunt*

## Act Third

### SCENES I AND II

*A beat*

*Storm still. Enter Kent and a Gentleman, meeting*

*Kent.* What 's here, beside foul weather ?

*Gent.* One minded like the weather, most unquietly.

## KING LEAR

*Kent.* I know you ; where 's the king ?

*Gent.* Contending with the fretful element ;

Bids the wind blow the earth into the sea,  
Or swell the curled waters 'bove the main,  
That things might change or cease ; [tears his white  
hair,

Which the impetuous blasts, with eyeless rage,  
Catch in their fury, and make nothing of ;  
Strives in his little world of man to out-scorn 10  
The to-and-fro-conflicting wind and rain.  
This night, wherein the cub-drawn bear would couch,  
The lion, and the belly-pinched wolf,  
Keep their fur dry, unbonneted he runs,  
And bids what will take all.]

*Kent.* But who is with him ?

*Gent.* None but the fool, who labours to out-jest  
His heart-struck injuries.

*Kent.* Sir, I do know you,  
And dare, upon the warrant of my note,  
Commend a dear thing to you. There is division,  
Although as yet the face of it be cover'd 20  
With mutual cunning, 'twixt Albany and Cornwall ;  
{Who have—as who have not, that their great stars  
Throned and set high ?—servants, who seem no less,  
Which are to France the spies and speculations

Intelligent of our state ; what hath been seen,  
 Either in snuffs and packings of the dukes,  
 Or the hard rein which both of them have borne  
 Against the old kind king, or something deeper,  
 Whereof perchance these are but furnishings,—}  
 [But true it is, from France there comes a power 30  
 Into this scatter'd kingdom, who already,  
 Wise in our negligence, have secret feet  
 In some of our best ports, and are at point  
 To show their open banner. Now to you ;  
 If on my credit you dare build so far  
 To make your speed to Dover, you shall find  
 Some that will thank you, making just report  
 Of how unnatural and bemadding sorrow  
 The king hath cause to plain.  
 I am a gentleman of blood and breeding, 40  
 And from some knowledge and assurance offer  
 This office to you.]

*Gent.* I will talk farther with you.

*Kent.*

No, do not.

For confirmation that I am much more  
 Than my out-wall, open this purse and take  
 What it contains. If you shall see Cordelia,—  
 As fear not but you shall,—show her this ring,  
 And she will tell you who your fellow is



## KING LEAR

That yet you do not know. Fie on this storm !  
I will go seek the king.

*Gent.* Give me your hand : 50  
Have you no more to say ?

*Kent.* Few words, but to effect more than all yet ;  
That, when we have found the king,—  
I'll this way, you that,—he that first lights on him  
Holla the other. *Exeunt severally*

### *Enter Lear and Fool*

*Lear.* Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks ! rage ! blow !  
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout  
Till you have drench'd the steeples, drown'd the cocks !  
You sulphurous and thought-executing fires, †  
Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,  
Singe my white head ! And thou, all-shaking thunder,  
Smite flat the thick rotundity o' the world,  
Crack nature's mould, all germins spill at once  
That make ingrateful man !

*Fool.* O nuncle, court holy-water in a dry house is better 10  
than this rain-water out o' door. Good nuncle, in,



KING LEAR

*Lear.* No, I will be the pattern of all patience ; †  
I will say nothing.

*Enter Kent*

*Kent.* Who 's there ?

*Fool.* Marry, here 's grace and a cod-piece ; that 's a wise 40  
man and a fool.

*Kent.* Alas, sir, sit you here ? things that love night  
Love not such nights as these ; the wrathful skies  
Gallow the very wanderers of the dark,  
And make them keep their caves : since I was man,  
Such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrid thunder,  
Such groans of roaring wind and rain, I ne'er  
Remember to have heard : man's nature cannot carry  
The afflictions nor the force.

*Lear.* Let the great gods,  
That keep this dreadful pother o'er our heads, 50  
Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch,  
That hast within thee undivulged crimes,  
Unwhipp'd of justice : hide thee, thou bloody hand,  
Thou perjur'd, and thou simular man of virtue  
That art incestuous : caitiff, in pieces shake,  
That under covert and convenient seeming  
Hast practis'd on man's life : close pent-up guilts,  
Rive your concealed centres and cry †  
These dreadful summoners grace. I am a man

More sinn'd against than sinning.

*Kent.* Alack, bare-headed ! 60

Gracious my lord, hard by here is a hovel ;  
Some friendship will it lend you 'gainst the tempest :  
Repose you there, whilst I to this hard house—  
More hard than is the stone whereof 'tis rais'd ;  
Which even but now, demanding after you,  
Denied me to come in—return, and force  
Their scant'd courtesy.

*Lear.* My wit begins to turn.

Come on, my boy : how dost, my boy ? art cold ?  
I am cold myself ; where is this straw, my fellow ?  
The art of our necessities is strange, 70  
That can make vile things precious. Come, your  
hovel.

Poor fool and knave, I have one part in my heart  
That sorrows yet for thee.

*Fool.*(singing)

He that has a little tiny wit,— †  
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,—  
Must make content with his fortunes fit,  
For the rain it raineth every day.

*Lear.* True, my good boy. Come, bring us to this hovel.

*Exeunt Lear and Kent*

{*Fool.* This is a brave night to cool a courtezan.

KING LEAR

I'll speak a prophecy ere I go : 80  
When priests are more in word than matter ;  
When brewers mar their malt with water ;  
When nobles are their tailors' tutors ;  
No heretics burn'd, but wenches' suitors ;  
When every case in law is right ;  
No squire in debt, nor no poor knight ;  
When slanders do not live in tongues,  
Nor cutpurses come not to throngs ;  
When usurers tell their gold i' the field,  
And bawds and whores do churches build, 90  
Then shall the realm of Albion  
Come to great confusion :  
Then comes the time, who lives to see 't,  
That going shall be used with feet.  
This prophecy Merlin shall make ; for I live before †  
his time. *Exit*}

SCENE III

*Gloucester's castle*

*Enter Gloucester and Edmund, with lights*

*Glo.* Alack, alack, Edmund, I like not this unnatural dealing. When I desired their leave that I might

pity him, they took from me the use of mine own house, charg'd me, on pain of their displeasure, neither to speak of him, entreat for him, nor any way sustain him.

*Edm.* Most savage and unnatural !

*Glo.* Go to, say you nothing. There's a division betwixt the dukes, and a worse matter than that, I have receiv'd a letter this night ; 'tis dangerous 10 to be spoken ; I have lock'd the letter in my closet : these injuries the king now bears will be revenged home ; there's part of a power already landed ; we must incline to the king. I will seek him and privily relieve him : go you, and maintain talk with the duke, that my charity be not of him perceived : if he ask for me, I am ill and gone to bed. Though I die for it, as no less is threaten'd me, the king my old master must be relieved. There is some strange 20 thing toward ; Edmund, pray you, be careful.

*Exit*

*Edm.* This courtesy, forbid thee, shall the duke

Instantly know, and of that letter too :

This seems a fair deserving, and must draw me

That which my father loses ; no less than all :

Then younger rises when the old doth fall. *Exit*

# KING LEAR

## SCENE IV

*The heath. Before a house*

*Enter Lear, Kent, and Fool*

*Kent.* Here is the place, my lord, good my lord, enter :  
The tyranny of the open night 's too rough  
For nature to endure. *Storm still*

*Lear.* Let me alone.

*Kent.* Good my lord, enter.

*Lear.* Wilt break my heart ?

*Kent.* I had rather break mine own. Good my lord, enter.

*Lear.* Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm  
Invades us to the skin : so 'tis to thee ;  
But where the greater malady is fix'd  
The lesser is scarce felt. Thou 'ldst shun a bear,  
But if the flight lay toward the raging sea 10  
Thou 'ldst meet the bear i' the mouth. When the  
mind 's free  
The body 's delicate : this tempest in my mind  
Doth from my senses take all feeling else  
Save what beats there. Filial ingratitude !  
Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand  
For lifting food to 't ? But I will punish sure.  
No, I will weep no more. {In such a night

To shut me out ! Pour on ; I will endure.}  
 In such a night as this ! O Regan, Goneril !  
 Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave you  
 all,—

20

O, that way madness lies, let me shun that ;  
 No more of that.

*Kent.* Good my lord, enter.

*Lear.* Prithee, go in thyself, seek thine own ease :

This tempest will not give me leave to ponder  
 On things would hurt me more. But I'll go in.  
 {(to the Fool)} In boy ; go first. You houseless  
 poverty,—

Nay, get thee in. I'll pray, and then I'll sleep.}

*Fool goes in*

Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,  
 That bide the pelting of this pitiless night,  
 How shall your houseless heads, and unfed sides,  
 Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you  
 From seasons such as these ? O, I have ta'en  
 Too little care of this ! Take physic, pomp,  
 Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,  
 That thou mayst shake the superflux to them  
 And show the heavens more just.

30

{*Edg. (within)* Fathom and half, fathom and half !

Roor Tom !

*The Fool runs out from the bovel}*



## KING LEAR

*Fool.* Come not in here, nuncle, here 's a spirit.

Help me, help me !

40

*Kent.* Give me thy hand, who 's there ?

*Fool.* A spirit, he says his name 's poor Tom.

*Kent.* What art thou that dost grumble there i' the straw ?

Come forth.

*Enter Edgar disguised as a madman*

*Edg.* Away ! the foul fiend follows me !

' Thorough the sharp hawthorn blows the cold wind.'

Go to thy cold bed and warm thee.

*Lear.* Hast thou given all to thy two daughters, and art thou come to this ?

*Edg.* Who gives any thing to poor Tom ? whom the foul fiend hath led through fire and through ford and whirlpool, o'er bog and quagmire, that has laid knives under his pillow, and halters in his pew, set ratsbane by his pottage, made him proud of heart, to ride on a bay trotting-horse over four-inch'd bridges, to course his own shadow for a traitor. Bless thy five wits ! Tom 's a-cold. Bless thee from whirlwinds, star-blasting, and taking ! Do poor Tom some charity, whom the foul fiend vexes. There could I have him now, and there, and there again. 50

*Storm still*

*Lear.* What, his daughters brought him to this pass ; 60

Couldst thou save nothing ? Didst thou give them  
all ?

*Fool.* Nay, he reserv'd a blanket, else we had been all  
sham'd.

*Lear.* Now, all the plagues that in the pendulous air  
Hang fated o'er men's faults light on thy daughters !

*Kent.* He hath no daughters, sir.

*Lear.* Death, traitor ! nothing could have subdued nature 70  
To such a lowness but his unkind daughters ;  
Is it the fashion that discarded fathers  
Should have thus little mercy on their flesh ?  
Judicious punishment ! 'twas this flesh begot  
Those pelican daughters. †

*Edg.* Pilicock sat on Pelicocks hill :  
A, lo, lo, lo !

*Fool.* This cold night will turn us all to fools and madmen.

*Edg.* Take heed o' the foul fiend, obey thy parents, keep  
thy words justly, swear not, commit not with man's 80  
sworn spouse, set not thy sweet heart on proud  
array ; Tom's a-cold.

*Lear.* What hast thou been ?

*Edg.* A serving-man, proud in heart and mind ; that curl'd  
my hair, wore gloves in my cap, serv'd the lust of  
my mistress' heart, and did the act of darkness with  
her, swore as many oaths as I spake words, and broke

# KING LEAR

them in the sweet face of heaven ; one that slept in  
the contriving of lust and wak'd to do it : wine lov'd 90  
I deeply, dice dearly, and in woman out-paramour'd  
the Turk : false of heart, light of ear, bloody of hand,  
hog in sloth, fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog  
in madness, lion in prey. Let not the creaking of  
shoes, nor the rustling of silks, betray thy poor heart  
to women ; keep thy foot out of brothel, thy hand  
out of placket, thy pen from lender's book, and defy  
the foul fiend.

" Still through the hawthorn blows the cold wind."

Hay, no, nonny.

Dolphin my boy, my boy, sessa ! let him trot by. † 100

*Storm still*

**Lear.** Why, thou wert better in thy grave than to answer  
with thy uncovered body this extremity of the skies.  
Is man no more but this ? Consider him well. Thou  
owest the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep  
no wool, the cat no perfume. Here's three on's  
are sophisticated ; thou art the thing itself : un-  
accommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare,  
forked animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings !  
come on, be true !

*Tearing off his clothes* †

**Fool.** Prithce, nuncle, be content ; 'tis a naughty night to 111  
swim in. Now a little fire in a wild field were like

an old lecher's heart, a small spark, all the rest in 's  
body cold. Look, here comes a walking fire.

*Enter Gloucester, with a torch*

*Edg.* This is the foul fiend Fliberdigibbet : he begins at  
curfew, and walks till the first cock ; he gives the  
web, and the pin, squinics the eye, and makes the  
hare-lip, mildews the white wheat, and hurts the poor  
creature of earth.

Saint Withold footed thrice the 'old ; 120  
He met the night-mare and her nine-fold ;  
Bid her alight,  
And her troth plight,  
And aroint thee, witch, aroint thee !

*Kent.*How fares your grace ?

*Lear.*What 's he ?

*Kent.*Who 's there ? What is 't you seek ?

*Glo.* What are you there ? Your names ?

*Edg.* Poor Tom, that eats the swimming frog, the toad, the  
todpole, the wall-newt, and the water, that in the 130  
fury of his heart, when the foul fiend rages, eats cow-  
dung for sallets, swallows the old rat and the ditch-  
dog, drinks the green mantle of the standing pool,  
who is whipp'd from tithing to tithing, and stock-  
punished, and imprisoned, who hath had three suits

## KING LEAR

to his back, six shirts to his body, horse to ride and  
weapon to wear ;

But mice and rats and such small deer †

Have been Tom's food for seven long year.

Beware my follower. Peace, Smolkin ; peace, thou  
fiend !

140

*Glo.* What, hath your grace no better company ?

*Edg.* The prince of darkness is a gentleman : Modu he's  
call'd, and Maho.

*Glo.* Our flesh and blood is grown so vile, my lord,  
That it doth hate what gets it.

*Edg.* Poor Tom's a-cold.

*Glo.* Go in with me : my duty cannot suffer  
To obey in all your daughters' hard commands :  
Though their injunction be to bar my doors,  
And let this tyrannous night take hold upon you, 150  
Yet have I ventur'd to come seek you out,  
And bring you where both food and fire is ready.

*Lear.* First let me talk with this philosopher.

What is the cause of thunder ?

*Kent.* Good my lord, take his offer, go into the house.

*Lear.* I'll talk a word with this most learned Theban.

What is your study ?

*Edg.* How to prevent the fiend, and to kill vermin.

*Lear.* Let me ask you one word in private.

*Kent.* Importune him to go, my lord ; 160

His wits begin to unsettle.

*Glo.* Canst thou blame him ?

*Storm still*

His daughters seek his death : O, that good Kent !

He said it would be thus, poor banish'd man !

Thou say'st the king grows mad ; I'll tell thee, friend,

I am almost mad myself : I had a son,

Now outlaw'd from my blood ; he sought my life,

But lately, very late : I lov'd him, friend,

No father his son dearer : true to tell thee,

The grief hath craz'd my wits. What a night's this !

I do beseech your grace,—

*Lear.* O, cry you mercy ; 170

Noble philosopher, your company.

*Edg.* Tom's a-cold.

*Glo.* In, fellow, there, into the hovel : keep thee warm.

*Lear.* Come, let's in all.

*Kent.* This way, my lord.

*Lear.* With him ;

I will keep still with my philosopher.

*Kent.* Good my lord, soothe him ; let him take the fellow.

*Glo.* Take him you on.

*Kent.* Sirrah, come on ; go along with us.

*Lear.* Come, good Athenian.

KING LEAR

*Glo.* No words, no words : hush. 180

*Edg.* Childe Rowland to the dark toun came : †

His word was still 'Fie, foh, and fum,

I smell the blood of a British man.' *Exeunt*

SCENE V

*Gloucester's castle*

*Enter Cornwall and Edmund*

*Corn.* I will have my revenge ere I depart the house.

*Edm.* How, my lord, I may be censured, that nature thus gives way to loyalty, something fears me to think of.

*Corn.* I now perceive, it was not altogether your brother's evil disposition made him seek his death, but a provoking merit, set a-work by a reproveable badness in himself.

*Edm.* How malicious is my fortune, that I must repent to be just ! This is the letter he spoke of, which approves him an intelligent party to the advantages 10 of France. O heavens ! that his treason were not, or not I the detector !

*Corn.* Go with me to the duchess.

*Edm.* If the matter of this paper be certain, you have mighty business in hand.

*Corn.* True or false, it hath made thee earl of Gloucester.

Seek out where thy father is, that he may be ready  
for our apprehension.

*Fdm. (aside)* If I find him comforting the king, it will  
stuff his suspicion more fully.—I will persevere in my 20  
course of loyalty, though the conflict be sore between  
that and my blood.

*Corn.* I will lay trust upon thee, and thou shalt find a  
dearer father in my love. *Exeunt*

## SCENE VI

*A chamber in a farmhouse adjoining the castle*

*Enter Gloucester, Lear, Kent, Fool, and Edgar*

*Glo.* Here is better than the open air ; take it thankfully ;  
I will piece out the comfort with what addition I  
can ; I will not be long from you.

*Kent.* All the power of his wits have given way to im-  
patience : the gods deserve your kindness !

*Exit Gloucester*

*Edg.* Frateretto calls me, and tells me Nero is an angler  
in the lake of darkness. Pray, innocent, beware the  
foul fiend.



## KING LEAR

*Fool.* Prithee, nuncle, tell me whether a madman be a gentleman or a yeoman. 10

*Lear.* A king, a king !

{*Fool.* No, he's a yeoman that has a gentleman to his son, for he's a mad yeoman that sees his son a gentleman before him. }

*Lear.* To have a thousand with red burning spits  
Come hissing in upon them,—

[*Edg.* The foul fiend bites my back.

*Fool.* He's mad that trusts in the tameness of a wolf, a horse's health, a boy's love, or a whore's oath.

*Lear.* It shall be done, I will arraign them straight ; 20  
(*to Edgar*) Come, sit thou here, most learned justice ;  
(*to the Fool*) Thou, sapient sir, sit here. No, you she  
foxes . . .

*Edg.* Look where he stands and glares ! Wantest thou †  
eyes at trial, madam ?

Come o'er the bourn, Bessy, to me. †

*Fool.* Her boat hath a leak,  
And she must not speak

Why she dares not come over to thee.

*Edg.* The foul fiend haunts poor Tom in the voice of a 30  
nightingale. Hoberdidance cries in Tom's belly  
for two white herring. Croak not, black angel ; I  
have no food for thee.

*Kent.* How do you, sir? Stand you not so amaz'd:

Will you lie down and rest upon the cushions?

*Lear.* I'll see their trial first. Bring in the evidence.

(*to Edgar*) Thou robed man of justice, take thy place;

(*to the Fool*) And thou, his yoke-fellow of equity,

Bench by his side. (*to Kent*) You are o' the com-  
mission;

40

Sit you too.

*Edg.* Let us deal justly.

Sleepest or wakest thou, jolly shepherd?

Thy sheep be in the corn;

And for one blast of thy minikin mouth,

Thy sheep shall take no harm.

Pur the cat is gray.

*Lear.* Arraign her first; 'tis Goneril. I here take my  
oath before this honourable assembly, kick'd the  
poor king her father.

50

*Fool.* Come hither, mistress. Is your name Goneril?

*Lear.* She cannot deny it.

*Fool.* Cry you mercy, I took you for a joint-stool.

*Lear.* And here's another, whose warp'd looks proclaim

What store her heart is made on. Stop her there!

Arms, arms, sword, fire! Corruption in the place!

False justicer, why hast thou let her 'scape?

*Edg.* Bless thy five wits!

KING LEAR

*Kent.* O pity, sir ! Where is the patience now,  
That you so oft have boasted to retain ? 60

*Edg. (aside)* My tears begin to take his part so much,  
They 'll mar my counterfeiting.

*Lear.* The little dogs and all,

Trey, Blanch, and Sweet-heart, see, they bark at me.

*Edg.* Tom will throw his head at them. Avaunt, you curs !

Be thy mouth or black or white,

Tooth that poisons if it bite ;

Mastiff, greyhound, mongrel, grim, †

Hound or spaniel, brach or him,

Bobtail tike or trundle-tail, 70

Tom will make them weep and wail :

For, with throwing thus my head,

Dogs leap the hatch, and all are fled.

Loudla, doodla ! Come, march to wakes and fairs  
and market-towns. Poor Tom, thy horn is dry. †

*Lear.* Then let them anatomize Regan ; see what breeds  
about her heart. Is there any cause in nature that  
makes this hardness ? *(to Edgar)* You, sir, I enter-  
tain you for one of my hundred, only I do not like  
the fashion of your garments. You 'll say they are 80  
Persian attire, but let them be changed.

*Kent.* Now, good my lord, lie here awhile.

*Lear.* Make no noise, make no noise ; draw the curtains :

so, so, so. We 'll go to supper i' the morning. So,  
so, so.

{*Fool*. And I 'll go to bed at noon.}

*Re-enter Gloucester*

*Glo.* Come hither, friend : where is the king my master ?

*Kent*. Here, sir, but trouble him not ; his wits are gone.

*Glo.* Good friend, I prithee, take him in thy arms ;

I have o'erheard a plot of death upon him : 90

There is a litter ready, lay him in 't,

And drive towards Dover, friend, where thou shalt  
meet

Both welcome and protection. Take up thy master :

If thou shouldst dally half an hour, his life,

With thine and all that offer to defend him,

Stand in assured loss. Take up, take up,

And follow me, that will to some provision

Give thee quick conduct.

[*Kent*. Oppressed nature sleeps.

This rest might yet have balm'd thy broken sinews,

Which, if convenience will not allow, 100

Stand in hard cure. (*to the Fool*) Come, help to bear  
thy master ;

Thou must not stay behind.]

*Glo.* Come, come, away.

*Exeunt [all but Edgar]*

## KING LEAR

[*Edg.* When we our betters see bearing our woes,  
We scarcely think our miseries our foes.  
Who alone suffers suffers most i' the mind,  
Leaving free things and happy shows behind :  
But then the mind much sufferance doth o'erskip,  
When grief hath mates, and bearing fellowship.  
How light and portable my pain seems now,  
When that which makes me bend makes the king bow,  
He childed as I father'd ! Tom, away ! 101  
Mark the high noises, and thyself bewray,  
When false opinion, whose wrong thoughts defile thee,  
In thy just proof repeals and reconciles thee.  
What will hap more to-night, safe 'scape the king !  
Lurk, lurk.] *Exit*

### SCENE VII

#### *Gloucester's castle*

*Enter Cornwall, Regan, Goneril, Edmund, and Servants*

*Corn.* Post speedily to my lord your husband ; show him  
this letter : the army of France is landed. Seek out  
the villain Gloucester. *Exeunt some of the Servants*

*Reg.* Hang him instantly.

*Gon.* Pluck out his eyes.

*Corn.* Leave him to my displeasure. Edmund, keep you  
 our sister company : the revenge we are bound to  
 take upon your traitorous father are not fit for your  
 beholding. Advise the duke, where you are going,  
 to a most festinant preparation : we are bound to 10  
 the like. Our post shall be swift and intelligence  
 betwixt us. Farewell, dear sister : farewell, my lord  
 of Gloucester.

*Enter Oswald*

How now, where 's the king ?

*Osw.* My lord of Gloucester hath convey'd him hence :  
 Some five or six and thirty of his knights,  
 Hot questrists after him, met him at gate ;  
 Who, with some other of the lords dependants,  
 Are gone with him towards Dover, where they  
 boast  
 To have well-armed friends.

*Corn.* Get horses for your mistress. 20

*Gon.* Farewell, sweet lord, and sister.

*Corn.* Edmund, farewell.

*Exeunt Goneril, Edmund, and Oswald*

Go seek the traitor Gloucester.

Pinion him like a thief, bring him before us.

*Exeunt other Servants*

Though we may not pass upon his life

KING LEAR

Without the form of justice, yet our power  
Shall do a courtesy to our wrath, which men  
May blame but not control. Who's there? the  
traitor?

*Enter Gloucester, brought in by two or three*

Reg. Ingrateful fox! 'tis he.

Corn. Bind fast his corky arms.

Glo. What means your graces? Good my friends,  
consider

30

You are my guests: do me no foul play, friends.

Corn. Bind him, I say.

*Servants bind him*

Reg. Hard, hard. O filthy traitor!

Glo. Unmerciful lady as you are, I am true.

Corn. To this chair bind him. Villain, thou shalt find—

*Regan plucks his beard*

Glo. By the kind gods, 'tis most ignobly done

To pluck me by the beard.

Reg. So white, and such a traitor!

Glo. Naughty lady,

These hairs which thou dost ravish from my chin

Will quicken and accuse thee: I am your host:

With robbers' hands my hospitable favours

You should not ruffle thus. What will you do?

40

Corn. Come, sir, what letters had you late from France?

Reg. Be simple answerer, for we know the truth.

*Corn.* And what confederacy have you with the traitors  
Late footed in the kingdom ?

*Reg.* To whose hands you have sent the lunatic king :  
Speak !

*Glo.* I have a letter guessingly set down,  
Which came from one that 's of a neutral heart,  
And not from one opposed.

*Corn.* Cunning.

*Reg.* And false. 50

*Corn.* Where hast thou sent the king ?

*Glo.* To Dover.

*Reg.* Wherefore to Dover ? Wast thou not charg'd at peril—

*Corn.* Wherefore to Dover ? Let him first answer that.

*Glo.* I am tied to the stake, and I must stand the course.

*Reg.* Wherefore to Dover, sir ?

*Glo.* Because I would not see thy cruel nails

Pluck out his poor old eyes, nor thy fierce sister

In his anointed flesh rash boarish fangs. †

The sea, with such a storm as his low'd head

In hell-black night endured, would have boil'd up, 60

And quench'd the stelled fires :

Yet, poor old heart, he holpt the heavens to rage ;

If wolves had at thy gate howl'd that derne time,

Thou shouldst have said, " Good porter, turn the key,"

All cruels else subscrib'd : but I shall see †



## KING LEAR

The winged vengeance overtake such children.

*Corn.* See 't shalt thou never. Fellows, hold the chair.

Upon these eyes of thine I'll set my foot.

*Glo.* He that will think to live till he be old,

Give me some help ! O cruel ! O ye gods ! 70

*Reg.* One side will mock another ; t'other too.

*Corn.* If you see vengeance—

*I.S.* Hold your hand, my lord :

I have serv'd you ever since I was a child ;

But better service have I never done you

Than now to bid you hold.

*Reg.* How now, you dog !

*I.S.* If you did wear a beard upon your chin,

I'd shake it on this quarrel. What do you mean ?

*Corn.* My villain ! *They draw and fight*

*I.S.* Why, then, come on, and take the chance of anger

*Reg.* Give me thy sword. A peasant stand up thus ! 80

*Takes a sword and runs at him behind*

*I.S.* O, I am slain, my lord ; yet have you one eye left

To see some mischief on him. O ! *Dies*

*Corn.* Lest it see more, prevent it. Out, vile jelly !

Where is thy lustre now ?

*Glo.* All dark and comfortless. Where's my son Edmund ;

Edmund, enkindle all the sparks of nature,

To quit this horrid act.

- Reg. Out, villain !  
 Thou call'st on him that hates thee : it was he  
 That made the overture of thy treasons to us,  
 Who is too good to pity thee. 90
- Glo. O my follies ! Then Edgar was abus'd.  
 Kind gods, forgive me that, and prosper him !
- Reg. Go thrust him out at gates, and let him smell  
 His way to Dover. (*exit one with Gloucester.*) How  
 is 't, my lord ? how look you ?
- Corn. I have receiv'd a hurt ; follow me, lady.  
 Turn out that eyeless villain, throw this slave  
 Upon the dunghill. Regan, I bleed apace ;  
 Untimely comes this hurt, give me your arm.  
*Exit Cornwall, led by Regan*
- [2.S. I'll never care what wickedness I do,  
 If this man come to good.
- 3.S. If she live long, 100  
 And in the end meet the old course of death,  
 Women will all turn monsters,
- 2.S. Let's follow the old earl, and get the Bedlam  
 To lead him where he would : his roguish madness  
 Allows itself to any thing.
- 3.S. Go thou : I'll fetch some flax and whites of eggs  
 To apply to his bleeding face. Now, heaven help  
 him ! *Exeunt severally*]

KING LEAR

Act Fourth

SCENE I

*The heath*

*Enter Edgar*

*Edg.* Yet better thus, and known to be contemn'd,  
Than still contemn'd and flatter'd to be worst ;  
The lowest and most dejected thing of fortune,  
Stands still in esperance, lives not in fear :  
The lamentable change is from the best ;  
The worst returns to laughter. {Welcome then,  
Thou unsubstantial air that I embrace !  
The wretch that thou hast blown unto the worst  
Owes nothing to thy blasts. But who comes here ?}

*Enter Gloucester, led by an Old Man*

Who 's here

My father, poorly led ? World, world, O world ! 10  
But that thy strange mutations make us hate thee,  
Life would not yield to age.

*O.M.O.* my good lord, I have been your tenant, and  
your father's tenant, this four-score . . .

*Glo.* Away, get thee away ; good friend, be gone :  
Thy comforts can do me no good at all,  
Thee they may hurt.

*O.M.* Alack, sir, you cannot see your way.

*Glo.* I have no way, and therefore want no eyes ;  
I stumbled when I saw ; full oft 'tis seen,  
Our means secure us, and our mere defects  
Prove our commodities. Ah, dear son Edgar,  
The food of thy abused father's wrath !  
Might I but live to see thee in my touch,  
I 'ld say I had eyes again !

20

*O.M.* How now, who 's there ?

*Edg. (aside)* O gods ! Who is 't can say 'I am at the  
worst' ?

I am worse than e'er I was.

*O.M.* 'Tis poor mad Tom.

*Edg. (aside)* And worse I may be yet : the worst is not  
As long as we can say 'This is the worst.'

*O.M.* Fellow, where goest ?

*Glo.* Is it a beggar-man ?

30

*O.M.* Madman, and beggar too.

*Glo.* 'A has some reason, else he could not beg.  
I' the last night's storm I such a fellow saw,  
Which made me think a man a worm ; my son  
Came then into my mind, and yet my mind

KING LEAR

Was then scarce friends with him : I have heard  
more since.

As flies are to the wanton boys, are we to the gods ;  
They kill us for their sport.

*Edg.* (aside) How should this be ?

Bad is the trade that must play the fool to sorrow,  
Angering itself and others. Bless thee, master ! 40

*Glo.* Is that the naked fellow ?

*O.M.* Ay, my lord.

*Glo.* Then, prithee, get thee gone : if for my sake  
Thou wilt o'ertake us hence a mile or twain  
I' the way toward Dover, do it for ancient love ;  
And bring some covering for this naked soul,  
Who I 'll entreat to lead me.

*O.M.* Alack, sir, he is mad.

*Glo.* 'Tis the times' plague, when madmen lead the blind.  
Do as I bid thee, or rather do thy pleasure ;  
Above the rest, be gone.

*O.M.* I 'll bring him the best 'parel that I have, 50  
Come on 't what will. *Exit*

*Glo.* Sirrah, naked fellow,—

*Edg.* Poor Tom 's a-cold. (aside) I cannot daub it farther.

*Glo.* Come hither, fellow.

*Edg.* {(aside) And yet I must.}—Bless thy sweet eyes,  
they bleed.

*Glo.* Know'st thou the way to Dover?

*Edg.* Both stile and gate, horse-way and foot-path.

Poor Tom hath been scar'd out of his good wits.

Bless thee, good man, from the foul fiend!

[Five fiends have been in poor Tom at once; of 60  
lust, as Haberdicat; Hoberdidance, prince of dumb-  
ness; Maho, of stealing; Modu, of murder;  
Fliberdigibbet, of mopping and mowing; who  
since possesses chambermaids and waiting-women.  
So, bless thee, master!]

*Glo.* Here, take this purse, thou whom the heavens'  
plagues

Have humbled to all strokes: that I am wretched

Makes thee the happier. Heavens, deal so still!

Let the superfluous and lust-dicted man,

That stands your ordinance, that will not see 70

Because he does not feel, feel your power quickly;

So distribution should undo excess

And each man have enough. Dost thou know Dover?

*Edg.* Ay, master.

*Glo.* There is a cliff whose high and bending head

Looks fearfully in the confined deep:

Bring me but to the very brim of it,

And I'll repair the misery thou dost bear

With something rich about me; from that place

## KING LEAR

I shall no leading need.

*Edg.* Give me thy arm : 80  
Poor Tom shall lead thee. *Exeunt*

### SCENE II

*Before the Duke of Albany's palace*

*Enter Goneril and Edmund*

*Gon.* Welcome, my lord : I marvel our mild husband  
Not met us on the way.

*Enter Oswald*

Now, where 's your master ?

*Osw.* Madam, within ; but never man so chang'd.  
I told him of the army that was landed ;  
He smil'd at it : I told him you were coming ;  
His answer was, ' The worse : ' of Gloucester's  
treachery  
And of the loyal service of his son  
When I inform'd him, then he call'd me sot,  
And told me I had turn'd the wrong side out :  
What most he should dislike seems pleasant to him ; 10  
What like, offensive.

*Gon.* (to *Edm.*) Then shall you go no further.  
It is the cowish terror of his spirit, †

That dares not undertake : he 'll not feel wrongs,  
 Which tie him to an answer. Our wishes on the way  
 May prove effects. Back, Edmund, to my brother ;  
 Hasten his musters, and conduct his powers :  
 I must change arms at home, and give the distaff  
 Into my husband's hands. This trusty servant  
 Shall pass between us : ere long you are like to hear,  
 If you dare venture in your own behalf, 20  
 A mistress's command. Wear this ; spare speech ;  
*Giving a favour*

Decline your head ; this kiss, if it durst speak,  
 Would stretch thy spirits up into the air :  
 Conceive, and fare thee well.

*Edm.* Yours in the ranks of death.

*Gon.* My most dear Gloucester !

*Exit Edmund*

{O, the difference of man and man} !  
 To thee a woman's services are due :  
 A fool usurps my bed. †

*Osw.* Madam, here comes my lord.

*Exit*

*Enter Albany*

*Gon.* I have been worth the whistle. †

*Alb.* O Goncril !

You are not worth the dust which the rude wind 30



## KING LEAR

Blows in your face. [I fear your disposition :  
That nature which contemns its origin  
Cannot be border'd certain in itself ;  
She that herself will sliver and disbranch  
From her material sap, perforce must wither  
And come to deadly use.

*Gon.* No more, the text is foolish.

*Alb.* Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile,  
Filths savour but themselves. What have you done ?  
Tigers, not daughters, what have you perform'd ? 40  
A father, and a gracious aged man,  
Whose reverence even the head-lugg'd bear would lick,  
Most barbarous, most degenerate, have you maddened.  
Could my good brother suffer you to do it ?  
A man, a prince, by him so benefited !  
If that the heavens do not their visible spirits  
Send quickly down to tame these vile offences,  
It will come,  
Humanity must perforce prey on itself,  
Like monsters of the deep.]

*Gon.* Milk-liver'd man ! 50  
That bear'st a cheek for blows, a head for wrongs ;  
Who hast not in thy brows an eye discerning  
Thine honour from thy suffering ; [that not know'st,  
Fools do those villains pity who are punish'd

Ere they have done their mischief. Where's thy drum ?

France spreads his banners in our noiseless land,  
With plumed helm thy state begins to threat,  
Whilst thou, a moral fool, sits still and cries  
' Alack, why does he so ? '

*Alb.* See thyself, devil !

Proper deformity seems not in the fiend 60  
So horrid as in woman.

*Gon.* O vain fool !

[*Alb.* Thou changed and self-cover'd thing, for shame,  
Be-monster not thy feature. Were 't my fitness  
To let these hands obey my blood,  
They are apt enough to dislocate and tear  
Thy flesh and bones : howe'er thou art a fiend,  
A woman's shape doth shield thee.

*Gon.* Marry, your manhood mew. . . . †

*Enter a Messenger*

*Alb.* What news ?]

*Mes.* O, my good lord, the Duke of Cornwall's dead, 70  
Slain by his servant, going to put out  
The other eye of Gloucester.

*Alb.* Gloucester's eyes ?

*Mes.* A servant that he bred, thrill'd with remorse,  
Oppos'd against the act, bending his sword

## KING LEAR

To his great master ; who thereat enrag'd  
Flew on him and amongst them fell'd him dead,  
But not without that harmful stroke which since  
Hath pluck'd him after.

*Alb.* This shows you are above,  
You justicers, that these our nether crimes  
So speedily can venge. But, O poor Gloucester ! 80  
Lost he his other eye ?

*Mes.* Both, both, my lord.  
This letter, madam, craves a speedy answer ;  
'Tis from your sister.

*Gon.* (*aside*) One way I like this well ;  
But being widow, and my Gloucester with her,  
May all the building o' my fancy pluck  
Upon my hateful life : another way,  
The news is not so tart.—I'll read, and answer.

*Exit*

*Alb.* Where was his son when they did take his eyes ?

*Mes.* Come with my lady hither.

*Alb.* He is not here.

*Mes.* No, my good lord ; I met him back again. 90

*Alb.* Knows he the wickedness ?

*Mes.* Ay, my good lord ; 'twas he inform'd against him,  
And quit the house on purpose, that their punishment  
Might have the freer course.

*Alb.*

Gloucester, I live

To thank thee for the love thou show'dst the king,  
And to revenge thine eyes. Come hither, friend :  
Tell me what more thou know'st. *Exeunt*

[ SCENE III

*The French camp near Dover*

*Enter Kent and a Gentleman*

*Kent.* Why the King of France is so suddenly gone back  
know you no reason ?

*Gent.* Something he left imperfect in the state, which since  
his coming forth is thought of, which imports to the  
kingdom so much fear and danger that his personal  
return was most required and necessary.

*Kent.* Who hath he left behind him general ?

*Gent.* The Marshal of France, Monsieur La Far.

*Kent.* Did your letters pierce the queen to any demon-  
stration of grief ?

10

*Gent.* I say she took them, read them in my presence,  
And now and then an ample tear trill'd down  
Her delicate cheek : it seem'd she was a queen  
Over her passion, who most rebel-like  
Sought to be king o'er her.

## KING LEAR

*Kent.* O, then it mov'd her.

*Gent.* Not to a rage ; patience and sorrow strove  
Who should express her goodliest. You have seen  
Sunshine and rain at once ; her smiles and tears  
Were like, a better way : those happy smilets †  
That play'd on her ripe lip seem'd not to know 20  
What guests were in her eyes, which parted thence  
As pearls from diamonds dropp'd ; in brief,  
Sorrow would be a rarity most belov'd,  
If all could so become it.

*Kent.* Made she no verbal question ?

*Gent.* Faith, once or twice she heav'd the name of ' father '  
Pantingly forth, as if it press'd her heart ;  
Cried ' Sisters ! sisters ! Shame of ladies ! sisters !  
Kent ! father ! sisters ! What, i' the storm ! i' the  
night ?  
Let pity not be believed ! ' There she shook  
The holy water from her heavenly eyes, 30  
And clamour moisten'd her : then away she started †  
To deal with grief alone.

*Kent.* It is the stars,  
The stars above us, govern our conditions,  
Else one self mate and make could not beget  
Such different issues. You spoke not with her since ?

*Gent.* No.

*Kent.* Was this before the king return'd ?

*Gent.* No, since.

*Kent.* Well, sir, the poor distressed Lear's i' the town,  
 Who sometime in his better tune remembers  
 What we are come about, and by no means  
 Will yield to see his daughter. 40

*Gent.* Why, good sir ?

*Kent.* A sovereign shame so elbows him, his own un-  
 kindness

That stripp'd her from his benediction, turn'd her  
 To foreign casualties, gave her dear rights  
 To his dog-hearted daughters, these things sting  
 His mind so venomously that burning shame  
 Detains him from Cordelia.

*Gent.* Alack, poor gentleman !

*Kent.* Of Albany's and Cornwall's powers you heard not ?

*Gent.* 'Tis so they are afoot.

*Kent.* Well, sir, I'll bring you to our master Lear, 50  
 And leave you to attend him : some dear cause  
 Will in concealment wrap me up awhile ;  
 When I am known aright, you shall not grieve  
 Lending me this acquaintance. I pray you, go  
 Along with me. *Exeunt*]

# KING LEAR

## SCENE IV

*The same. A tent*

*Enter, with drum and colours, Cordelia, Doctor,  
and Soldiers*

*Cord.* Alack, 'tis he : why, he was met even now  
As mad as the vex'd sea, singing aloud,  
Crown'd with rank fumiter and furrow-weeds,  
With hor-docks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo-flowers,  
Darnel, and all the idle weeds that grow  
In our sustaining corn. A century send forth ; †  
Search every acre in the high-grown field,  
And bring him to our eye. [*exit an Officer.*] What  
can man's wisdom  
In the restoring his bereaved sense ?  
He that can help him take all my outward worth. 10

*Doc.* There is means, madame :  
Our foster-nurse of nature is repose,  
The which he lacks ; that to provoke in him,  
Are many simples operative, whose power  
Will close the eye of anguish.

*Cord.* All blest secrets.  
All you unpublish'd virtues of the earth,  
Spring with my tears ! be aidant and remediate

In the good man's distress ! Seek, seek for him,  
Lest his ungovern'd rage dissolve the life  
That wants the means to lead it.

*Enter a Messenger*

*Mes.* News, madam ; 20

The British powers are marching hitherward.

*Cord.* 'Tis known before ; our preparation stands  
In expectation of them. O dear father,  
It is thy business that I go about ;  
Therefore great France  
My mourning and important tears hath pitied.  
No blown ambition doth our arms incite,  
But love, dear love, and our ag'd father's right :  
Soon may I hear and see him ! *Exeunt*

SCENE V

*Gloucester's castle*

*Enter Regan and Oswald*

*Reg.* But are my brother's powers set forth ?

*Osw.* Ay, madam.

*Reg.* Himself in person ?

*Osw.* Madam, with much ado :

Your sister is the better soldier.



## KING LEAR

*Reg.* Lord Edmund spake not with your lady at home?

*Osw.* No, madam.

*Reg.* What might import my sister's letters to him?

*Osw.* I know not, lady.

*Reg.* Faith, he is posted hence on serious matter.

It was great ignorance, Gloucester's eyes being out,  
To let him live : where he arrives he moves 10  
All hearts against us : Edmund, I think, is gone,  
In pity of his misery, to dispatch  
His nighted life ; moreover, to descry  
The strength o' the army.

*Osw.* I must needs after him, madam, with my letters.

*Reg.* Our troop sets forth to-morrow, stay with us ;  
The ways are dangerous.

*Osw.* I may not, madam,

My lady charged my duty in this business,

*Reg.* Why should she write to Edmund ? Might not you 20  
Transport her purposes by word ? Belike,  
Something—I know not what : I'll love thee much,  
Let me unseal the letter.

*Osw.* Madam, I'd rather—

*Reg.* I know your lady does not love her husband,  
I am sure of that, and at her late being here  
She gave strange æillades and most speaking looks  
To noble Edmund. I know you are of her bosom.

*Osw.* Ay, madam.

*Reg.* I speak in understanding, for I know 't :

Therefore I do advise you, take this note :

My lord is dead, Edmund and I have talk'd, 30

And more convenient is he for my hand

Than for your lady's ; you may gather more.

If you do find him, pray you, give him this,

And when your mistress hears thus much from you,

I pray, desire her call her wisdom to her.

So, fare well.

If you do chance to hear of that blind traitor,

Preferment falls on him that cuts him off.

*Osw.* Would I could meet him, madam ! I should show

What lady I do follow.

*Reg.*

Fare thee well.

*Exeunt* 40

# SCENE VI

*Fields near Dover*

*Enter Gloucester, and Edgar dressed like a peasant*

*Glo.* When shall we come to the top of that same hill ?

*Edg.* You do climb up it now : look, how we labour.

*Glo.* Methinks the ground is even.

*Edg.*

Horrible steep.

## KING LEAR

Hark, do you hear the sea ?

*Glo.* No, truly,

*Edg.* Why then your other senses grow imperfect  
By your eyes' anguish.

*Glo.* So may it be indeed :  
Methinks thy voice is alter'd, and thou speak'st  
With better phrase and matter than thou didst.

*Edg.* You 're much deceiv'd : in nothing am I changed  
But in my garments.

*Glo.* Methinks you 're better spoken. 10

*Edg.* Come on, sir, here 's the place, stand still. How  
fearful

And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low !  
The crows and choughs that wing the midway air  
Show scarce so gross as beetles ; half way down  
Hangs one that gathers sampire, dreadful trade ;  
Methinks he seems no bigger than his head,  
The fishermen that walk upon the beach  
Appear like mice, and yon tall anchoring bark  
Diminish'd to her cock, her cock, a buoy  
Almost too small for sight : the murmuring surge 20  
That on the unnumber'd idle pebbles chafes  
Cannot be heard : it 's so high, I 'll look no more,  
Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight  
Topple down headlong.

*Glo.* Set me where you stand.

*Edg.* Give me your hand : you are now within a foot  
Of the extreme verge, for all beneath the moon  
Would I not leap upright.

*Glo.* Let go my hand.

Here, friend, 's another purse, in it a jewel  
Well worth a poor man's taking ; fairies and gods  
Prosper it with thee ! Go thou further off, 30  
Bid me farewell, and let me hear thee going.

*Edg.* Now fare you well, good sir.

*Glo.* With all my heart.

*Edg.* Why I do trifle thus with his despair  
Is done to cure it.

*Glo.* (*kneeling*) O you mighty gods !

This world I do renounce, and in your sights  
Shake patiently my great affliction off :  
If I could bear it longer and not fall  
To quarrel with your great opposeless wills,  
My snuff and loathed part of nature should  
Burn itself out. If Edgar live, O bless him ! 40  
Now, fellow, fare thee well. *He falls*

*Edg.* Gone, sir, farewell.

And yet I know not how conceit may rob  
The treasury of life, when life itself  
Yields to the theft : had he been where he thought,

## KING LEAR

By this had thought been past. Alive or dead ?  
Ho, you sir ! Hear you, sir ! speak !  
Thus might he pass indeed, yet he revives.  
What are you, sir ?

*Glo.* Away, and let me die.

*Edg.* Hadst thou been aught but gossamer, feathers, air,  
So many fathom down precipitating, 50  
Thou hadst shiver'd like an egg, but thou dost  
breathe,  
Hast heavy substance, bleed'st not, speakest, art  
sound.

Ten masts at each make not the altitude  
Which thou hast perpendicularly fell :  
Thy life 's a miracle. Speak yet again

*Glo.* But have I fall'n, or no ?

*Edg.* From the dread summit of this chalky bourn.  
Look up a-height ; the shrill-gorg'd lark so far  
Cannot be seen or heard : do but look up.

*Glo.* Alack, I have no eyes. 60  
Is wretchedness depriv'd that benefit,  
To end itself by death ? 'Twas yet some comfort,  
When misery could beguile the tyrant's rage  
And frustrate his proud will.

*Edg.* Give me your arm :  
Up : so. How feel you your legs ? You stand.

*Glo.* Too well, too well.

*Edg.* This is above all strangeness.  
Upon the crown of the cliff, what thing was that  
Which parted from you ?

*Glo.* A poor unfortunate beggar.

*Edg.* As I stood here below, methought his eyes  
Were two full moons ; 'a had a thousand noses, 70  
Horns, whelk'd and waved like the enridged sea :  
It was some fiend ; therefore, thou happy father,  
Think that the clearest gods, who made their honours  
Of men's impossibilities, have preserv'd thee.

*Glo.* I do remember now : henceforth I'll bear  
Affliction till it do cry out itself  
'Enough, enough,' and die. That thing you speak of  
I took it for a man ; often would it say  
'The fiend, the fiend : ' he led me to that place.

*Edg.* Bear free and patient thoughts. But who comes here ? 80

*Enter Lear, fantastically dressed with wild flowers*

The safer sense will ne'er accommodate  
His master thus.

*Lear.* No, they cannot touch me for coining ; I am the  
king himself.

*Edg.* O thou side-piercing sight !

*Lear.* Nature is above art in that respect. There's your  
press-money. That fellow handles his bow like a

## KING LEAR

crow-keeper; draw me a clothier's yard. Look,  
look, a mouse! Peace, peace; this toasted cheese  
will do it. There's my gauntlet; I'll prove it on a 90  
giant. Bring up the brown bills. O, well flown,  
bird in the air: hagh! Give the word. †

*Edg.* Sweet marjoram.

*Lear.* Pass.

*Glo.* I know that voice.

*Lear.* Ha, Goneril, ha, Regan! They flattered me like a †  
dog, and told me I had white hairs in my beard ere  
the black ones were there. To say 'ay' and 'no'  
to every thing I said 'ay' and 'no' to was no good  
divinity. When the rain came to wet me once, and 100  
the wind to make me chatter, when the thunder  
would not peace at my bidding, there I found them,  
there I smelt them out. Go to, they are not men of  
their words: they told me I was every thing; 'tis a  
lie, I am not ague-proof.

*Glo.* The trick of that voice I do well remember:  
Is 't not the king?

*Lear.* Ay, every inch a king:  
When I do stare, see how the subject quakes.  
I pardon that man's life. What was thy cause?  
Adultery?  
Thou shalt not die for adultery, no:

110

The wren goes to 't, and the small gilded fly  
 Does lecher in my sight.  
 Let copulation thrive, for Gloucester's bastard son  
 Was kinder to his father than my daughters  
 Got 'tween the lawful sheets.  
 To 't luxury, pell-mell, for I lack soldiers.  
 Behold yon simpering dame,  
 Whose face between her forks presageth snow,  
 That minces virtue, and does shake the head 120  
 To hear of pleasure's name ;  
 The fitchew nor the soiled horse goes to 't  
 With a more riotous appetite.  
 Down from the waist they 're Centaurs,  
 Though women all above :  
 But to the girdle do the gods inherit,  
 Beneath is all the fiends' ;  
 There 's hell, there 's darkness, there 's the sulphury pit,  
 Burning, scalding, stench, consumption ; fie, fie,  
 fie ! pah, pah ! Give me an ounce of civet, good 130  
 apothecary, to sweeten my imagination : there 's  
 money for thee.

*Glo.* O, let me kiss that hand !

*Lear.* Here, wipe it first, it smells of mortality.

*Glo.* O ruin'd piece of nature ! This great world  
 Should so wear out to nought. Do you know me ?



KING LEAR

*Lear.* I remember thy eyes well enough. Dost thou squiny on me? No, do thy worst, blind Cupid; I'll not love. Read thou that challenge, mark the penning of 't.

140

*Glo.* Were all the letters suns, I could not see one.

*Edg.* I would not take this from report: it is,  
And my heart breaks at it.

*Lear.* Read.

*Glo.* What, with the case of eyes?

*Lear.* O, ho, are you there with me? No eyes in your head, nor no money in your purse? Your eyes are in a heavy case, your purse in a light, yet you see how this world goes.

*Glo.* I see it feelingly.

150

*Lear.* What, art mad? A man may see how the world goes with no eyes. Look with thy ears: ~~see~~ how yon justice rails upon yon simple thief. Hark in thy ear: handy-dandy, which is the thief, which is the justice? Thou hast seen a farmer's dog bark at a beggar?

*Glo.* Ay, sir.

*Lear.* And the creature run from the cur? There thou mightst behold the great image of authority: a dog's obey'd in office.

Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand!

†  
161

Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thine own  
back;

Thy blood hotly lusts to use her in that kind  
For which thou whip'st her; the usurer hangs the  
cozener.

Through tatter'd rags small vices do appear,  
Robes and furr'd gowns hides all. {Plate sins with gold,  
And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;  
Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw does pierce it.  
None does offend, none, I say, none; I'll able 'em:  
Take that of me, my friend, who have the power 170  
To seal the accuser's lips.} Get thee glass eyes,  
And, like a scurvy politician, seem  
To see the things thou dost not.

No now, pull off my boots: harder, harder: so.

*Edg.* O, matter and impertinency mix'd!

Reason in madness!

*Lear.* If thou wilt weep my fortune, take my eyes.

I know thee well enough, thy name is Gloucester,  
Thou must be patient; we came crying hither:  
Thou knowest, the first time that we smell the air, 180  
We wail and cry. I will preach to thee, mark me.

*Glo.* Alack, alack the day!

*Lear.* When we are born, we cry that we are come  
To this great stage of fools, this a good block. †

KING LEAR

It were a delicate stratagem, to shoe  
A troop of horse with felt : {I'll put 't in proof ;}  
And when I have stol'n upon these son-in-laws,  
Then kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill !

*Enter three Gentlemen*

*Gent.* O, here he is ; lay hands upon him, sirs,  
Your most dear—

190

*Lear.* No rescue ? What, a prisoner ? I am even  
The natural fool of fortune. Use me well,  
You shall have ransom. Let me have a surgeon ;  
I am cut to the brains.

*Gent.* You shall have any thing.

*Lear.* No seconds ? all myself ?

Why, this would make a man of salt,  
To use his eyes for garden water-pots,  
[Aye, and laying autumn's dust.

*Gent.* Good sir,—]

*Lear.* I will die bravely, like a bridegroom. What ?

200

I will be jovial : come, come ; I am a king,  
My masters, know you that.

*Gent.* You are a royal one, and we obey you.

*Lear.* Then there's life in 't. Nay, an you get it, you  
shall get it with running.

*Exit running ; Attendants follow.*

*Gent.* A sight most pitiful in the meanest wretch,

Past speaking of in a king ! Thou hast one daughter,  
Who redeems nature from the general curse  
Which twain have brought her to.

*Edg.* Hail, gentle sir.

*Gent.* Sir, speed you, what 's your will ? 210

*Edg.* Do you hear aught of a battle toward ?

*Gent.* Most sure and vulgar : every one hears that,  
Which can distinguish sense.

*Edg.* But, by your favour,  
How near 's the other army ?

*Gent.* Near, and on speedy foot ; the main descry †  
Stands on the hourly thought.

*Edg.* I thank you, sir : that 's all.

*Gent.* Though that the queen on special cause is here,  
Her army is mov'd on.

*Edg.* I thank you, sir. *Exit Gent.*

*Glo.* You ever-gentle gods, take my breath from me ;  
Let not my worser spirit tempt me again 220  
To die before you please !

*Edg.* Well, pray you, father.

*Glo.* Now, good sir, what are you ?

*Edg.* A most poor man, made lame by fortune's blows,  
Who, by the art of known and feeling sorrows,  
Am pregnant to good pity. Give me your hand,  
I'll lead you to some biding.

KING LEAR

*Glo.* Hearty thanks ;  
The bounty and the benison of heaven  
To save thee !

*Enter Oswald*

*Osw.* A proclaim'd prize ! Most happy !  
That eyeless head of thine was framed flesh  
To raise my fortunes. Thou most unhappy traitor, 230  
Briefly thyself remember, the sword is out  
That must destroy thee.

*Glo.* Now let thy friendly hand  
Put strength enough to 't. *Edgar interposes*

*Osw.* Wherefore, bold peasant,  
Durst thou support a publish'd traitor ? Hence,  
Lest the infection of his fortune take †  
Like hold on thee. Let go his arm.

*Edg.* Chill not let go, sir, without 'cagion.

*Osw.* Let go, slave, or thou diest !

*Edg.* Good gentleman, go your gait, let poor volk pass.  
An chud have been swagger'd out of my life, it 240  
would not have been so long by a vortnight. Nay,  
come not near the old man ; keep out, che vor ye, or  
I'll try whether your costard or my ballow be the  
harder : I'll be plain with you.

*Osw.* Out, dunghill ! *They fight*

*Edg.* Chill pick your teeth, sir: come; no matter for  
your foins.

*Oswald falls*

*Osw.* Slave, thou hast slain me. Villain, take my purse:  
If ever thou wilt thrive, bury my body,  
And give the letters which thou find'st about me 250  
To Edmund Earl of Gloucester; seek him out  
Upon the British party. O, untimely death!  
Death!

*Dies*

*Edg.* I know thee well, a servicable villain,  
As duteous to the vices of thy mistress  
As badness would desire.

*Glo.* What, is he dead?

*Edg.* Sit you down, father; rest you.

Let's see his pockets: these letters that he speaks of  
May be my friends. He's dead; I am only sorry  
He had no other deathsman. Let us see: 260  
Leave, gentle wax; and, manners, blame us not:  
To know our enemies' minds, we'd rip their hearts;  
Their papers, is more lawful.

*(reads)* 'Let your reciprocal vows be remembered.  
You have many opportunities to cut him off: if your  
will want not, time and place will be fruitfully  
offered. There is nothing done, if he return the  
conqueror, then am I the prisoner, and his bed my

KING LEAR

gaol, from the loathed warmth whereof deliver  
me, and supply the place for your labour. 270

Your wife (so I would say)

your affectionate servant,

[and for you her own for venter,] †

‘GONERIL.’

O undistinguish’d space of woman’s wit !

A plot upon her virtuous husband’s life,

And the exchange my brother ! Here, in the sands,

Thee I’ll rake up, the post unsanctified

Of murderous lechers, and in the mature time

With this ungracious paper strike the sight 280

Of the death-practis’d duke : for him ’tis well

That of thy death and business I can tell.

*Glo.* The king is mad : how stiff is my vile sense,

That I stand up, and have ingenious feeling

Of my huge sorrows ! Better I were distract :

So should my thoughts be fenced from my griefs,

And woes by wrong imaginations lose

The knowledge of themselves. *Drum afar off*

*Edg.* Give me your hand :

Far off, methinks, I hear the beaten drum :

Come, father, I’ll bestow you with a friend. 290

*Exeunt*

SCENE VII

*A tent in the French camp. Lear on a bed asleep, soft music playing ; Gentleman, and others standing*

*Enter Cordelia, Kent, and Doctor*

**Cord.** O thou good Kent, how shall I live and work,  
To match thy goodness ? My life will be too short,  
And every measure fail me.

**Kent.** To be acknowledg'd, madam, is o'erpaid.  
All my reports go with the modest truth,  
Nor more, nor clipp'd, but so.

**Cord.** Be better suited :  
These weeds are memories of those worser hours,  
I prithee, put them off.

**Kent.** Pardon me, dear madam ;  
Yet to be known shortens my made intent :  
My boon I make it, that you know me not  
Till time and I think meet.

10

**Cord.** Then be 't so, my good lord. *(to the Doctor)* How  
does the king ?

**Doc.** Madame, sleeps still.

**Cord.** O you kind gods,  
Cure this great breach in his abused nature !  
The untun'd and hurrying senses, O, wind up



KING LEAR

Of this child-changed father !

*Doc.* So please your majesty

That we may wake the king ; he hath slept long.

*Cord.* Be govern'd by your knowledge, and proceed 20

I' the sway of your own will. Is he array'd ?

*Gent.* Ay, madam, in the heaviness of his sleep

We put fresh garments on him.

*Doc.* Good madam, be by when we do awake him ;

I doubt not of his temperance.

[*Cord.* Very well.

*Doc.* Please you, draw near. Louder the music there !]

*Cord.* O my dear father ! Restoration hang

Thy medicine on my lips, and let this kiss

Repair those violent harms that my two sisters

Have in thy reverence made !

*Kent.* Kind and dear princess ! 30

*Cord.* Had you not been their father, these white flakes

Had challenged pity of them. Was this a face

To be expos'd against the warring winds ?

[To stand against the deep dread-bolted thunder ?

In the most terrible and nimble stroke

Of quick cross lightning ? to watch—poor perdu !—

With this thin helm ?] Mine injurer's dog, †

Though he had bit me, should have stood that night

Against my fire, and wast thou fain, poor father,

To hovel thee with swine and rogues forlorn, 40  
 In short and musty straw ? Alack, alack !  
 'Tis wonder that thy life and wits at once  
 Had not concluded all. He wakes ; speak to him.

*Doc.* Madam, do you ; 'tis fittest.

*Cord.* How does my royal lord ? How fares your majesty ?

*Lear.* You do me wrong to take me out o' the grave :  
 Thou art a soul in bliss, but I am bound  
 Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears  
 Do scald like molten lead.

*Cord.* Sir, know me.

*Lear.* You are a spirit, I know, where did you die ? 50

*Cord.* Still, still, far wide !

*Doc.* He's scarce awake, let him alone awhile.

*Lear.* Where have I been ? Where am I ? Fair daylight ?  
 I am mightily abus'd. I should e'en die with pity,  
 To see another thus. I know not what to say.  
 I will not swear these are my hands : let's see ;  
 I feel this pin prick. Would I were assur'd  
 Of my condition !

*Cord.* O, look upon me, sir,  
 And hold your hands in benediction o'er me.  
 No, sir, you must not kneel.

*Lear.* Pray, do not mock : 60  
 I am a very foolish fond old man,

## KING LEAR

Fourscore and upward, {not an hour more nor less ;}  
And, to deal plainly,  
I fear I am not in my perfect mind.  
Methinks I should know you, and know this man ;  
Yet I am doubtful, for I am mainly ignorant  
What place this is, and all the skill I have  
Remembers not these garments, nor I know not  
Where I did lodge last night. Do not laugh at me,  
For, as I am a man, I think this lady 70  
To be my child Cordelia.

*Cord.* And so I am.

*Lear.* Be your tears wet ? yes, faith. I pray, weep not :  
If you have poison for me, I will drink it.  
I know you do not love me, for your sisters  
Have, as I do remember, done me wrong :  
You have some cause, they have not.

*Cord.* No cause, no cause.

*Lear.* Am I in France ?

*Kent.* In your own kingdom, sir.

*Lear.* Do not abuse me.

*Doc.* Be comforted, good madame : the great rage,  
You see, is cur'd in him : [and yet it is danger 80  
To make him even o'er the time he has lost.]  
Desire him to go in, trouble him no more  
Till further settling.

*Cord.* Will 't please your highness walk ?

*Lear.* You must bear with me.

Pray now, forget and forgive : I am old and foolish.

*Exeunt all but Kent and Gentleman*

*[Gent.]* Holds it true, sir, that the Duke of Cornwall was so slain ?

*Kent.* Most certain, sir.

*Gent.* Who is conductor of his people ?

*Kent.* As 'tis said, the bastard son of Gloucester.

90

*Gent.* They say Edgar, his banished son, is with the Earl of Kent in Germany.

*Kent.* Report is changeable. 'Tis time to look about, the powers of the kingdom approach apace.

*Gent.* The arbitrement is like to be bloody. Fare you well, sir. *Exit*

*Kent.* My point and period will be thoroughly wrought, Or well or ill, as this day's battle 's fought. *Exit*

KING LEAR

Act Fifth

SCENE I

*The British camp near Dover*

*Enter, with drum and colours, Edmund, Regan,  
Gentlemen, and Soldiers*

*Edm.* Know of the duke if his last purpose hold,  
Or whether since he is advis'd by aught  
To change the course : he 's full of abdication  
And self-reproving ; bring his constant pleasure.  
*To a Gentleman, who goes out*

*Reg.* Our sister's man is certainly miscarried.

*Edm.* 'Tis to be doubted, madam.

*Reg.* Now, sweet lord,  
You know the goodness I intend upon you,  
Tell me but truly, but then speak the truth,  
Do you not love my sister ?

*Edm.* Ay, honour'd love.

*Reg.* But have you never found my brother's way, 10  
To the forfended place ?

*[Edm.]* That thought abuses you.

*Reg.* I am doubtful that you have been conjunct

And bosom'd with her, as far as we call hers.]

*Edm.* No, by mine honour, madam.

*Reg.* I never shall endure her ; dear my lord,  
Be not familiar with her.

*Edm.* Fear me not.—

She and the duke her husband !

*Enter, with drum and colours, Albany, Goneril,  
and Soldiers*

[*Gon. (aside)* I had rather lose the battle than that sister  
Should loosen him and me.]

*Alb.* Our very loving sister, well be-met.

20

For this I hear ; the king is come to his daughter,  
With others, whom the rigour of our state  
Forc'd to cry out. [Where I could not be honest,  
I never yet was valiant : for this business,  
It toucheth us, as France invades our land,  
Not bolds the king, with others, whom, I fear,  
Most just and heavy causes make oppose.

†

*Edm.* Sir, you speak nobly.]

*Reg.* Why is this reason'd ?

*Gon.* Combine together 'gainst the enemy ;

For these domestic dear particulars  
Are not to question here.

†

*Alb.* Let us then determine  
With the ancient of war on our proceedings.

31

## KING LEAR

[*Edm.* I shall attend you presently at your tent.]

*Reg.* Sister, you 'll go with us ?

*Gon.* No.

*Reg.* 'Tis most convenient ; pray you, go with us.

*Gon. (aside)* O, ho, I know the riddle.—I will go.

*As they are going out, enter Edgar disguised*

*Edg.* If e'er your grace had speech with man so poor,  
Hear me one word.

*Alb.* I 'll overtake you. Speak.

*Exeunt all but Albany and Edgar*

*Edg.* Before you fight the battle, ope this letter. 40

If you have victory, let the trumpet sound  
For him that brought it : wretched though I seem,  
I can produce a champion that will prove  
What is avouched there. If you miscarry,  
Your business of the world hath so an end,  
{And machination ceases.} Fortune love you !

*Alb.* Stay till I have read the letter.

*Edg.* I was forbid it.

When time shall serve, let but the herald cry,  
And I 'll appear again.

*Alb.* Why, fare thee well : I will o'erlook the paper. 50

*Exit Edgar*

*Re-enter Edmund*

*Edm.* The enemy 's in view, draw up your powers.

Hard is the guess of their great strength and forces  
 By diligent discovery ; but your haste  
 Is now urg'd on you.

*Alb.* We will greet the time. *Exit*

*Edm.* To both these sisters have I sworn my love ;  
 Each jealous of the other, as the stung  
 Are of the adder. Which of them shall I take ?  
 Both, one, or neither ? Neither can be enjoy'd,  
 If both remain alive : to take the widow  
 Exasperates, makes mad her sister Goneril ; 60  
 And hardly shall I carry out my side,  
 Her husband being alive. Now then we'll use  
 His countenance for the battle, which being done,  
 Let her that would be rid of him devise  
 His speedy taking off. As for his mercy  
 Which he intends to Lear and to Cordelia,  
 The battle done, and they within our power,  
 Shall never see his pardon ; for my state  
 Stands on me to defend, not to debate. *Exit*



# KING LEAR

## SCENES II AND III

*A field between the two camps*

*Enter the powers of France over the stage, Cordelia  
with her father in her hand ; and exeunt*

*Enter Edgar and Gloucester*

*Edg.* Here, father, take the shadow of this bush  
For your good host ; pray that the right may thrive :  
If ever I return to you again,  
I'll bring you comfort.

*Glo.* Grace go with you, sir !

*Exit Edgar*

*Alarum and retreat within. Re-enter Edgar*

*Edg.* Away, old man ; give me thy hand ; away !  
King Lear hath lost, he and his daughter ta'en :  
Give me thy hand ; come on.

*Glo.* No farther, sir ; a man may rot even here.

*Edg.* What, in ill thoughts again ? Men must endure  
Their going hence, even as their coming hither : 10  
Ripeness is all : come on.

*Glo.* {And that's true too.}

*Exeunt*

*Enter, in conquest, with drum and colours, Edmund ; Lear  
and Cordelia, as prisoners ; Captain, Soldiers, etc.*

*Edm.* Some officers take them away : good guard,  
Until their greater pleasures best be known  
That are to censure them.

*Cord.* We are not the first  
Who with best meaning have incurr'd the worst.  
For thee, oppressed king, am I cast down ;  
Myself could else out-frown false fortune's frown.  
Shall we not see these daughters, and these sisters ?

*Lear.* No, no ! Come, let's away to prison :  
We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage :  
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down 10  
And ask of thee forgiveness : so we'll live,  
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh  
At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues  
Talk of court news ; and we'll talk with them too,  
Who loses and who wins, who's in, who's out,  
And take upon's the mystery of things,  
As if we were God's spies ; and we'll wear out,  
In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great ones  
That ebb and flow by the moon.

KING LEAR

*Edm.* Take them away.

*Lear.* Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia, 20

The gods themselves throw incense ; have I caught thee ?

He that parts us shall bring a brand from heaven,  
And fire us hence like foxes. Wipe thine eyes ;  
The good years shall devour them, flesh and fell, †  
Ere they shall make us weep : we 'll see 'em starve  
first.

*Come. Exeunt Lear and Cordelia, guarded*

*Edm.* Come hither, captain ; hark.

Take thou this note, go follow them to prison :  
One step I have advanc'd thee ; if thou dost  
As this instructs thee, thou dost make thy way  
To noble fortunes : know thou this, that men 30  
Are as the time is : to be tender-minded  
Does not become a sword : thy great employment  
Will not bear question ; either say thou 'lt do 't,  
Or thrive by other means.

*Cap.* I 'll do 't, my lord.

*Edm.* About it, and write happy when thou hast done.

Mark, I say instantly, and carry it so

As I have set it down.

[*Cap.* I cannot draw a cart, nor eat dried oats ;

If it be man's work, I 'll do 't. *Exit*]

*Flourish. Enter Albany, Goneril, Regan, another Captain,  
and Soldiers*

*Alb.* Sir, you have show'd to-day your valiant strain, 40  
And fortune led you well : you have the captives  
That were the opposites of this day's strife :  
We do require them of you, so to use them  
As we shall find their merits and our safety  
May equally determinc.

*Edm.* Sir, I thought it fit  
To send the old and miserable king  
To some retention and appointed guard ;  
Whose age has charms in it, whose title more, †  
To pluck the common bosom of his side, 50  
And turn our impress'd lances in our eyes  
Which do command them. With him I sent the  
queen :

My reason all the same ; and they are ready  
To-morrow or at further space to appear  
Where you shall hold your session. [At this time  
We sweat and bleed : the friend hath lost his friend ;  
And the best quarrels, in the heat, are curs'd  
By those that feel their sharps.  
The question of Cordelia and her father  
Requires a fitter place.]

*Alb.* Sir, by your patience,

# KING LEAR

I hold you but a subject of this war, 60  
 Not as a brother.

*Reg.* That 's as we list to grace him.  
 Methinks our pleasure might have been demanded,  
 Ere you had spoke so far. He led our powers,  
 Bore the commission of my place and person ;  
 The which immediacy may well stand up  
 And call itself your brother.

*Gon.* Not so hot :  
 In his own grace he doth exalt himself  
 More than in your advancement.

*Reg.* In my right,  
 By me invested, he compeers the best.  
*Gon.* That were the most, if he should husband you. 70  
*Reg.* Jesters do oft prove prophets.

*Gon.* Hola, hola !  
 That eye that told you so look'd but a-squint.

*Reg.* Lady, I am not well, else I should answer  
 From a full-flowing stomach. General,  
 Take thou my soldiers, prisoners, patrimony ;  
 {Dispose of them, of me ; the walls is thine ;} †  
 Witness the world, that I create thee here  
 My lord and master.

*Gon.* Mean you to enjoy him then ?  
*Alb.* The let alone lies not in your good will.

*Edm.* Nor in thine, lord.

*Alb.* Half-blooded fellow, yes. 80

*Edm.* Let the drum strike, and prove my title good.

*Alb.* Stay yet, hear reason. Edmund, I arrest thee  
On capital treason, and in thine attainst  
This gilded serpent (*pointing to Gon.*). For your claim,  
fair sister,

I bar it in the interest of my wife ;  
'Tis she is sub-contracted to this lord,  
And I, her husband, contradict your banns.  
If you will marry, make your loves to me ;  
My lady is bespoken.

{ *Gon.* An interlude ! }

*Alb.* Thou art arm'd, Gloucester : { let the trumpet sound : }  
If none appear to prove upon thy head 91  
Thy heinous, manifest, and many treasons,  
There is my pledge (*throwing down a glove*) : I'll prove  
it on thy heart,  
Ere I taste bread, thou art in nothing less  
Than I have here proclaim'd thee.

*Reg.* Sick, O, sick !

*Gon.* (*aside*) If not, I'll ne'er trust poison.

*Edm.* (*throwing down a glove*) There's my exchange : what  
in the world he is  
That names me traitor, villain-like he lies :

KING LEAR

Call by thy trumpet : he that dares approach,  
On him, on you,—who not ?—I will maintain      100  
My truth and honour firmly.

*Alb.* A herald, ho !

*Edm.*                      A herald, ho, a herald !

*Alb.* Trust to thy single virtue, for thy soldiers,  
All levied in my name, have in my name  
Took their discharge.

*Reg.*                      This sickness grows upon me.

*Alb.* She is not well ; convey her to my tent.

*Exit Regan, led*

*Enter a Herald*

Come hither, herald,—Let the trumpet sound,—  
And read out this.

*Cap.* Sound, trumpet !                      *A trumpet sounds*

*Her. (reads)* ‘ If any man of quality or degree within      110  
the host of the army will maintain upon Edmund,  
suppos’d Earl of Gloucester, that he ’s a manifold  
traitor, let him appear at the third sound of the  
trumpet : he is bold in his defence.’

*Edm.* Sound ! Again !

*Enter Edgar, at the third sound, a trumpet before him*

*Alb.* Ask him his purposes, why he appears  
Upon this call o’ the trumpet.

*Her.*                      What are you ?

Your name and quality ? and why you answer  
This present summons ?

*Edg.* O know, my name is lost  
By treason's tooth ; bare-gnawn and canker-bit : 120  
Yet am I noble. Where is the adversary  
I come to cope withal ?

*Alb.* Which is that adversary ?

*Edg.* What 's he that speaks for Edmund, Earl of Gloucester ?  
*Edm.* Himself : what say'st thou to him ?

*Edg.* Draw thy sword,  
That if my speech offend a noble heart,  
Thy arm may do thee justice : here is mine.  
Behold, it is the privilege of my tongue,  
My oath, and my profession : I protest,  
Maugre thy strength, youth, place and eminence,  
Despite thy victor sword and fire-new fortune, 130  
Thy valour and thy heart, thou art a traitor,  
False to thy gods, thy brother and thy father,  
Conspirant 'gainst this high illustrious prince,  
And from the extremest upward of thy head  
To the descent and dust beneath thy feet,  
A most toad-spotted traitor. Say thou 'No,'  
This sword, this arm and my best spirits are bent  
To prove upon thy heart, whereto I speak,  
Thou liest.



## KING LEAR

*Edm.* In wisdom I should ask thy name, 140  
But since thy outside looks so fair and warlike  
And that thy tongue some say of breeding breathes,  
{What safe and nicely I might well delay}  
By right of knighthood, I disdain and spurn : †  
Here do I toss those treasons to thy head ;  
With the hell-hated lie o'erwhelm thy heart ;  
Which for they yet glance by and scarcely bruise,  
This sword of mine shall give them instant way,  
Where they shall rest for ever. Trumpets, speak !

*Alarums. They fight. Edmund falls*

*Alb.* Save him, save him !

*Gon.* This is mere practice, Gloucester : 150  
By the law of arms thou art not bound to answer  
An unknown opposite ; thou art not vanquish'd,  
But cozen'd and beguill'd.

*Alb.* Stop your mouth, dame,  
Or with this paper shall I stopple it.  
Thou worse than any thing, read thine own evil.  
Nay, no tearing, lady, I perceive you know it.

*Gon.* Say, if I do, the laws are mine, not thine :  
Who shall arraign me for 't ?

*Alb.* Most monstrous !  
Know'st thou this paper ?

*Gon.*

Ask me not what I know.

*Exit**Alb.* Go after her, she 's desperate, govern her. 160

*Edm.* What you have charg'd me with, that have I done,  
 And more, much more, the time will bring it out :  
 'Tis past, and so am I ; but what art thou  
 That hast this fortune on me ? If thou be'st noble,  
 I do forgive thee.

*Edg.*

Let 's exchange charity.

I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund ;  
 If more, the more thou hast wrong'd me.  
 My name is Edgar, and thy father's son.  
 The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices †  
 Make instruments to scourge us : 170  
 The dark and vicious place where thee he got  
 Cost him his eyes.

*Edm.*

Thou hast spoken truth ;

The wheel is come full circle ; I am here.

*Alb.* Methought thy very gait did prophesy

A royal nobleness : I must embrace thee :

Let sorrow split my heart, if I did ever

Hate thee or thy father !

*Edg.*

Worthy prince, I know 't.

*Alb.* Where have you hid yourself ?

How have you known the miseries of your father ?

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*Edg.* By nursing them, my lord. List a brief tale, 180  
 And when 'tis told, O, that my heart would burst !  
 The bloody proclamation to escape  
 That follow'd me so near,—O, our lives' sweetness :  
 That with the pain of death would hourly die  
 Rather than die at once !—taught me to shift  
 Into a madman's rags, to assume a semblance  
 That very dogs disdain'd : and in this habit  
 Met I my father with his bleeding rings,  
 Their precious stones new lost ; became his guide,  
 Led him, begg'd for him, saved him from despair ; 190  
 Never—O Father !—reveal'd myself unto him,  
 Until some half-hour past, when I was arm'd,  
 Not sure, though hoping of this good success,  
 I ask'd his blessing, and from first to last  
 Told him my pilgrimage, but his flaw'd heart,  
 Alack, too weak the conflict to support,  
 'Twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief,  
 Burst smilingly.

*Edm.* This speech of yours hath mov'd me,  
 And shall perchance do good ; but speak you on,  
 You look as you had something more to say. 200

*Alb.* If there be more, more woful, hold it in,  
 For I am almost ready to dissolve,  
 Hearing of this.

[*Edg.* This would have seem'd a period  
 To such as love not sorrow ; but another, †  
 To amplify too much, would make much more.  
 And top extremity. Whilst I  
 Was big in clamour, came there in a man,  
 Who, having seen me in my worst estate,  
 Shunn'd my abhorr'd society, but then, finding  
 Who 'twas that so endur'd, with his strong arms 210  
 He fasten'd on my neck, and bellow'd out  
 As he 'ld burst heaven, threw me on my father,  
 Told the most piteous tale of Lear and him  
 That ever ear receiv'd : which in recounting  
 His grief grew puissant, and the strings of life  
 Began to crack : twice then the trumpet sounded,  
 And there I left him tranc'd.

*Alb.* But who was this ?

*Edg.* Kent, sir, the banish'd Kent, who in disguise  
 Follow'd his enemy king, and did him service  
 Improper for a slave.] 220

*Enter one with a bloody knife*

*Gent.* Help, help !

*Alb.* What kind of help ?

What means that bloody knife ?

*Gent.* It 's hot, it smokes ;

It came even from the heart of—

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*Alb.* Who, man ? Speak !

*Gent.* Your lady, sir, your lady : and her sister  
By her is poisoned ; she hath confess'd it.

*Edm.* I was contracted to them both : all three  
Now marry in an instant.

*Alb.* Produce the bodies, be they alive or dead.

*Exit Gentleman*

This justice of the heavens, that makes us tremble, 230  
Touches us not with pity.

*Edg.* Here comes Kent, sir.

*Enter Kent*

*Alb.* O, 'tis he ;

The time will not allow the compliment  
That very manners urges.

*Kent.* I am come

To bid my king and master aye good night :  
Is he not here ?

*Alb.* Great thing of us forgot !

Speak, Edmund, where 's the king ? and where 's  
Cordelia ?

See'st thou this object, Kent ?

*The bodies of Goneril and Regan are brought in*

*Kent.* Alack, why thus ?

*Edm.* Yet Edmund was belov'd :

The one the other poison'd for my sake,

And after slew herself.

240

*Alb.* Even so. Cover their faces.

*Edm.* I pant for life : some good I mean to do,  
 Despite of mine own nature. Quickly send,  
 Be brief in 't, to the castle, for my writ  
 Is on the life of Lear and on Cordelia :  
 Nay, send in time.

*Alb.* Run, run, O, run !

*Edg.* To who, my lord ? Who hath the office ? send  
 Thy token of reprieve.

*Edm.* Well thought on, take my sword, the captain,  
 Give it the captain.

*Alb.* Haste thee, for thy life.

250

*Exit Edgar*

*Edm.* He hath commission from thy wife and me  
 To hang Cordelia in the prison, and  
 To lay the blame upon her own despair,  
 That she fordid herself.

*Alb.* The gods defend her ! Bear him hence awhile.

*Edmund is borne off*

*Enter Lear, with Cordelia in his arms ; Edgar, Captain,  
 and others following*

*Lear.* Howl, howl, howl, howl ! O, you are men of stones :  
 Had I your tongues and eyes, I would use them so

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That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone for  
ever!

I know when one is dead and when one lives;  
She's dead as earth. Lend me a looking-glass, 260  
If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,  
Why then she lives.

*Kent.* Is this the promis'd end?

*Edg.* Or image of that horror?

*Alb.* Fall and cease.

*Lear.* This feather stirs, she lives; if it be so,  
It is a chance which does redeem all sorrows  
That ever I have felt.

*Kent.* Ah my good master!

*Lear.* Prithee, away.

*Edg.* 'Tis noble Kent, your friend.

*Lear.* A plague upon you murderous traitors all!  
I might have sav'd her; now she's gone for ever!  
Cordelia, Cordelia, stay a little. Ha! 270  
What is't thou say'st? Her voice was ever soft,  
Gentle and low, an excellent thing in women.  
I kill'd the slave that was a-hanging thee.

*Capt.* 'Tis true, my lords, he did.

*Lear.* Did I not, fellow?

I have seen the day, with my good biting falchion  
I would have made them skip: I am old now,

And these same crosses spoil me. Who are you ?

Mine eyes are not o' the best, I'll tell you straight.

*Kent.* If fortune bragg'd of two she lov'd or hated,

One of them we behold.

280

*Lear.* { This is a dull sight. } Are not you Kent ?

*Kent.*

The same,

Your servant Kent. Where is your servant Caius ?

*Lear.* He's a good fellow, I can tell that ;

He'll strike, and quickly too : he's dead and rotten.

*Kent.* No, my good lord ; I am the very man—

*Lear.* I'll see that straight.

*Kent.* That from your first of difference and decay

Have follow'd your sad steps.

*Lear.*

You're welcome hither.

*Kent.* Nor no man else : all's cheerless, dark and deadly.

Your eldest daughters have fordone themselves,

290

And desperately are dead.

*Lear.*

So think I too.

*Alb.* He knows not what he sees, and vain is it

That we present us to him.

*Edg.*

Very bootless.

*Enter a Captain*

*Capt.* Edmund is dead, my lord.

*Alb.*

That's but a trifle here.

You lords and noble friends, know our intent.



# KING LEAR

What comfort to this decay may come  
 Shall be applied : for us, we will resign,  
 During the life of this old majesty,  
 To him our absolute power : (*to Edgar and Kent*) you,  
     to your rights ;

With boot, and such addition as your honours      300  
 Have more than merited. All friends shall taste  
 The wages of their virtue, and all foes  
 The cup of their deservings. O, see, see !

*Lear.* And my poor fool is hang'd ! No, no life !

Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,  
 And thou no breath at all ? O thou wilt come  
 No more ; never, never, never. {never, never.}  
 Pray you, undo this button : thank you, sir.

[Oh, oh, oh, oh !] {Do you see this ! Look on †  
     her, look, her lips,  
 Look there, look there !}

*Edg.*                      He faints. My lord, my lord !      310

*Lear.* Break, heart ; I prithee, break !      †

*Edg.*                                      Look up, my lord.

*Kent.* Vex not his ghost : O, let him pass ! he hates him  
     That would upon the rack of this tough world  
     Stretch him out longer.                      *Lear dies*

*Edg.*                                      O, he is gone indeed.

*Kent.* The wonder is he hath endur'd so long :

He but usurp'd his life.

*Alb.* Bear them from hence. Our present business  
Is to general woe. (*to Kent and Edgar*) Friends of  
my soul, you twain

Rule in this kingdom and the gor'd state sustain.

*Kent.* I have a journey, sir, shortly to go ; 320

My master calls, and I must not say no.

*Alb.* The weight of this sad time we must obey,

Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.

The oldest have borne most : we that are young

Shall never see so much, nor live so long.

*Exeunt, with a dead march*

## Notes

I. i. 76. *precious square of sense*; this is a characteristically compressed phrase, which must, I think, mean 'the senses when applying their most exacting standard.'

I. i. 85. F reads

*Although our last and least ; to whose young love,  
The Vines of France, and Milke of Burgundie,  
Strive to be interest.*

I. i. 96-105. Cf. Desdemona to Brabantio, *Othello*, I. iii.

I. i. 111. *mysteries*; Q, *mistresse*; F, *miseries*.

I. i. 174. *Our potency made good*; obscure; perhaps simply 'if my power is to maintain itself.'

I. i. 243. F reads *She is herself a dowry*: but Q is quite intelligible and stronger: 'it is herself that I want, dowry or no dowry; but her perfections are such that they are dowry besides.'

I. i. 270. *wash'd eyes*; usually explained as 'tearful eyes'; but there is no reason why Cordelia should be tearful at leaving her sisters, though every reason why she should be at thus leaving her father. If the reading is right (and the texts agree in it) can it mean 'clear-sighted'?

I. i. 281. Neither the F reading, *the want that you have wanted*, nor the efforts of commentators, make the obscurity of this jingle much less obscure. The general sense is clear; 'you deserve what you are getting.'

I. ii. 21. *top the*; Edward's conj. for Q *tooth*'; F *to'th*.

I. ii. 136. *And out he comes*; so Q. F reads *Pat : he comes*: of which the effectiveness is a good deal diminished by the fact that F omits Q's *Edgar* in the line above. And one may notice as a possibly suspicious and certainly interesting circumstance, that F both here

and in a famous line in *Hamlet* (*Now might I do it pat . . .*) inserts ■ *pat* of which Q knows nothing.

I. ii. 181. Cf. again Iago's comments on Othello's character.

I. iii. 21. *With checks as flatteries, when they are seen abus'd*; Tyrwhitt explains, "with checks, as well as flatterers, when they (*i.e.* flatterers) are seen to be abused." The emendators have been busy with the line without much success.

I. iv. 109. *Lady the brach*; so Malone. Q, *Lady o' the brach, F, the Lady brach*. Cf. Hotspur in 1 *Henry IV*, III. i. 240. *Lady my brach*: 'brach' was originally a small hound of either sex, but was in Shakespeare's time coming to be used for a bitch.

I. iv. 111. *gall*; so F. Q reads *gull*. The relevance of either is obscure.

I. iv. 225. Q reads *his notion, weaknes, or his discernings are lethergie, sleeping, or waking*; *ha! sure 'tis not so*. One is tempted to think that Shakespeare had in mind not only mental but physical debility, and wrote *his motion's weakness, or his discernings are lethargie*. . . .

I. iv. 282. *disfeatur'd*; Q reads *disuetur'd*, which is a possible auditory error for the reading given. F reads *disnatur'd*, for which Q's reading would be a possible enough graphical error. With the reading of the text both moral and physical deficiencies are alluded to, with F's reading only the former.

I. iv. 299. *untented*; if this, the reading of Q corrected and F, is right (Q uncorrected reads *untender*), Nares' explanation seems the best: 'not put into a way of cure as a wound is when a surgeon has put a tent into it.' A tent is a roll of lint used in cleansing a fresh wound.

II. ii. 8. *Lipsbury pinfold*; presumably some topical allusion to which we have lost the clue.

II. ii. 30. *sop o' the moonshine*; 'to make a sop of' normally

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means to set floating (as toast on liquor); it is possible that there may be some allusion to the dish then known as 'eggs in moon-shine.' But the real sense required would seem to be one corresponding to 'I'll let daylight into you.'

II. ii. 45. Cf. *Othello*, II. iii.

II. ii. 71. *Which are too intrinse to unloose*; F; Q reads *to intrench to inloose*. The F reading is not too convincing and commentators have been busy, with small success.

II. ii. 74. *halcyon beaks*; it was a current belief that the halcyon (*i.e.* kingfisher), if hung up, would always swing beak to wind.

II. ii. 78. There seems no reason to emend *smoile* which is read by both Q and F. It is a dialect form of 'smile,' not inappropriate to Kent when he remembers to borrow other accents.

II. ii. 80. Much has been written on Camelot; presumably another topical allusion to a place then famous for its geese.

II. ii. 94-100. An admirable character sketch of Iago.

II. ii. 139. *basest and contemned'st*; Capell's reading: not wholly satisfactory; Q uncorrected reads *belest and contand*, Q corrected, *basest and temnest*.

II. ii. 157-58. *out of heaven's benediction comest To the warm sun*; cf. Heywood's *Dialogues on Proverbs*; *In your rennyng from hym to me, ye runne out of God's blessing into the warm sunne*; *i.e.* from good to worse. Skeat suggested that the proverb refers to the haste of the congregation to leave the shelter of the church, immediately after the priest's benediction, running from God's blessing into the warm sun. This explanation seems as good as any that has been suggested.

II. ii. 161. *miracles*; so F. Q readings are *my rackles* (uncorrected) and *my wracke* (corrected). One would feel happier about the F reading were it not that the Q compositor had no difficulty with *miracle*, either in I. i. 224 or IV. vi. 55.

II. ii. 164-166. *and shall . . . remedies*; many emendations have been proposed to remove the obscurity of the lines, but none can be considered satisfactory. Jennens suggested that Kent is reading disjointed fragments of Cordelia's letter. *From this enormous state* seems to mean 'in this abnormal state of affairs.'

II. iv. 100. *commands her service*; Q uncorrected, *come and tends service*; Q corrected, *commands her service*. F dealing as best it can with Q uncorrected, *commands, tends, service*. The trouble suggests a MS. confusion of *attends her service* and *commands her service*.

II. iv. 170. *tender-hefted*; so F; Q, *tender bested*. Both readings are difficult, and none of the many attempted explanations is very helpful. The inevitable emendation, *tender-hearted* (Pope and Rowe) is quite unconvincing, though it gives no doubt the general required sense.

III. ii. 4. *thought-executing*; usually explained as 'acting with the rapidity of thought,' but this does not seem wholly satisfactory, and something meaning 'more rapid than thought,' such as 'thought-excelling,' would be more pointed.

III. ii. 37. *No I will be the pattern of all patience*; cf. the description of Leir by Perillus in the old play:—*But he, the myrrour of mild patience, Puts up all wrongs, and never gives reply*.

III. ii. 58. *concealed centres*; so Q. But there is a good deal to be said for F's *concealing continents*, and, if it were not that it has a little the air of a tinkering for the sake of metre, one would accept it without hesitation.

III. ii. 74-77. Cf. Clown's song in *Twelfth Night*, V. i.

III. ii. 95. *I live before his time*; the whole prophecy is perhaps a later addition in the interests of the actor who played the fool. It is an imitation of some lines formerly attributed to Chaucer called '*Chaucer's Prophecy*.' It is suspicious that the conditions of

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the first two lines are traditionally likely, of the rest very much the reverse; but no doubt one should not expect consistency in doggerel.

III. iv. 53. *knives under his pillow and balters in his pew* (to tempt him to suicide). Theobald pointed out that the allusion is to an incident mentioned in Harsnet's *Declaration*.

III. iv. 75. *pelican daughters*, i.e. daughters who are like the young pelicans, feeding on their mother's (in this case father's) life.

III. iv. 101. *sessa*; Malone's emendation; F *Sesey*, Q *case*. The word occurs in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Induction, l. 6; and elsewhere. But there is no certainty about its meaning.

III. iv. 110. *come on, be true*: so Q uncorrected. The fact that Q corrected reads only *come on* may imply that after this there was a difficult word or words which the corrector gave up in despair, and F deciphered, or conjectured, as *(un)button here*, (the usual reading). But the Q reading is defensible enough: 'Off with the lendings, the accidents, and then I shall be truly my self, my bare self.'

III. iv. 138-39. Cp. *The Romance of Sir Bevis of Hamptoun*;—

*"Rattes and myce and suche small dere,  
Was his meate that seven yere."*

III. iv. 181. *Childe Rowland to the dark toun came*; F reads *towre*, Q *towne*; as F seems to be the only authority for *tower* (though the other two lines occur among fragments of an old ballad), I have retained Q's reading, though in the northern spelling. But Q also reads *come*, and I suspect that the true reading is *Childe Rowland's to the dark toun come*.

III. vi. 25. Q actually reads *wanst thou eyes, at tral madam*. The reading given is perhaps as little unsatisfactory as any that have been suggested, seeing that we cannot demand coherent sense in this scene. (But? *wanst* = *wann'st*, i.e., 'grows pale'.)

III. vi. 26. *Come o'er the bourn . . .*; the 'burden' of an old English ballad.

III. vi. 68-69. Both Q and F give the comma after *mongrel* which is usually omitted. Apart from the fact that there is no reason why a mongrel should be grim, the run of the lines seems to need four different types of hound in this line, followed by the two pairs of the next line; and as both Q and F read *him* (F *hym*) I have left it so, the phrase thus meaning 'bitch or dog,' without more violence to grammar than may be expected in this kind of doggerel. But I have to admit that I cannot find either meaning or emendation for *grim*.

III. vi. 75. *Thy horn is dry*. "A horn was usually carried about by every Tom of Bedlam, to receive such drink as the charitable might afford him, with whatever scraps of food they might give him" (Malone), etc.

III. vii. 58-63. F characteristically reads the more ordinary *stick* and *stern* for Q's *rash* and *dearne*, and *bare* for the somewhat mysterious Q *lowd*. But *rash* (to thrust) and *dearne* (dark, dire) are both recognised words, and there seems no reason to change them; and *low'd* (i.e. 'lowered,' 'bent') is at least as vivid as *bare*. In line 60 Q uncorrected reads *layd up*, corrected, *bod up*. The F *buoy'd up* may be right, but involves an odd meaning for *buoy'd*.

III. vii. 65. *All cruels else subscrib'd*; so Q; F *subscribe*. Either reading leaves the passage obscure, and many attempts at explanation have been made, none very convincing. E.g. 'acknowledge the claims of all creatures, however cruel they may be at other times,' or 'give up all cruel things else' or 'all their other cruelties being yielded or forgiven.'

IV. ii. 12. It is almost irresistibly tempting to adopt Wright's conjecture of *currish terror*. Q uncorrected reads *cowish curre*, corrected, *cowish terrer*, F *cowish terror*. 'Cowish' is an ex-



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trremely rare word, 'currish' common enough (and occurring, for what it is worth, in Harsnet).

IV. ii. 28. I have kept, very dubiously, the reading of Q corrected. The reading of Q uncorrected *My foote usurps my body*, sounds precisely the pointed but obscure remark which lends itself to such simplifying emendation. Q 2 is clearly moving on the same lines as Q uncorrected, since it reads *My foote usurps my head*. F reads *My foole usurps my body*.

IV. ii. 29. *I have been worth the whistle*; usually interpreted as 'I was once worth something,' an interpretation which is indeed supported by a proverb, 'a poor dog that is not worth the whistling,' but does not seem to have any particular relevance. Goneril has not been complaining of Albany's neglect of her, but of his cowish spirit.

IV. ii. 68. *your manhood mew...*; Q uncorrected, *your manhood now*, corrected, *your manhood mew...*; I can see neither necessity nor justification for taking 'mew' as an interjection of contempt. Goneril surely means, 'if all that is troubling you is the difference in sex, put off your manhood ('mew' = moult, shed) and I shall be happy to meet you on equal terms.'

IV. iii. 19-32. The passage is not satisfactory, but neither are the guesses at interpretation; so I leave it without adding another stone to the cairn; but inserting one comma.

IV. iv. 6. *century*; Q reads *a centurie is sent forth*, F *a Centery forth*. The word in either form has been taken to mean 'sentry' on the grounds that *century* is an anachronism. But there is no evidence that 'sentry' ever meant anything but a single man on a fixed post of guard, and in any case one man is inadequate for the search. So that the meaning is, I think, clearly, anachronism or no anachronism, simply 'a body of soldiers.'

IV. vi. 92. *well flown, bird in the air*; so Q. F reads *well flown bird*; *i' the clout, i' the clout*, making Lear revert from the hawk to the arrow.

IV. vi. 96. *Ha, Goneril, ha, Regan*; so Q. F reads *Ha, Goneril' with a white beard!* which is certainly much more pointed.

IV. vi. 160. Q reads *dogge, so bade in office*; of interest as showing how corruptions may be due to aural, not visual, error (*cf. the mistress of Heccat* in l. i. 111 for *mysteries*).

IV. vi. 184. *This a good block*; the Q reading. One cannot be surprised at sudden 'starts' in Lear's speech; but one cannot help feeling that there underlies this phrase a parallel to or amplification of *This great stage of fools*; and Q prints with comma after *fools*, full-stop after *block*.

IV. vi. 215-16. The reading given is that of F. Q reads *Near and on speed for't, the maine descries Standst on the hourly thoughts*. Of this *on speed for't* (*i.e.* for it, the battle) would stand well enough, but the rest is hopeless. F's reading is at least intelligible: 'we expect every hour to see their main body.'

IV. vi. 235. *Lest the infection. . .*; there is an interesting parallel here to the source of the sub-plot in *Arcadia*.

IV. vi. 273. The actual reading of Q is *and for you her owne for Venter, Gonorill*. The fact that it makes no sense as it stands seems to be no excuse for omitting it. We may suspect either 'fo venture' or 'fore-venter': but the italicisation raises difficulties.

IV. vii. 37. *injurer's*; Q reads *injurious, F enemy's*.

V. i. 26. *not bolds the king*; if the reading is right *bolds* must mean 'emboldens,' but the sense is very awkward. Mason's conjecture is tempting, *Not the old king*, since Albany's point appears to be that he will fight against foreign invasion, but cannot feel any enthusiasm in fighting against the wronged king.

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V. i. 30. Q, *domestique dore particulars*, which suggests that the true reading at any rate had *particulars* as a noun. Just possibly, *domestic'd o'er particulars*. The reading in the text does not pretend to do more than give the general sense.

V. iii. 24. *the good years*. There is no justification for Hanmer's assumption that this is a corruption of 'goujeres,' a word which existed only in Hanmer's imagination (see N.E.D. *sub voc.*). The word (good-years) "came to be used in imprecatory phrases, as denoting some undefined malefic power or agency." Here there is a very clear reversed allusion to the devouring of the good kine-years by the lean ones in Genesis xli. 18-21.

V. iii. 49. Q uncorrected, *coren bossom*, corrected, *common bossome*. We must I suppose accept the correction, followed by F, with such conviction as we may.

V. iii. 76. *the walls is thine*; a very odd phrase. Theobald read *they all are thine*; I suggest, as graphically easier, *then all is thine*.

V. iii. 144-145. Q *By right of knighthood*. F inserts a line before this, *What safe and nicely I might well delay*, and Q ■■ it stands requires an object for *disdain*. Q may therefore have merely omitted a line, feeble though the line is. (Or ? read *My* for *By*).

V. iii. 169. Q has the remarkable reading *vertues* for F's *vices*.

V. iii. 204. *but another . . .*; "one more such circumstance only, by amplifying what is already too much, would add to it, and so exceed what seemed to be the limit of sorrow" (Wright).

V. iii. 309-13. F gives the stage-direction for Lear's death after *looks there*, and assigns *Break heart, I prithee break* to Kent. Q has no direction for the death, but attributes the speeches ■■ in the text, with, I think, far better effect.

# Glossary

MANY words and phrases in Shakespeare require glossing, not because they are in themselves unfamiliar, but for the opposite reason, that Shakespeare uses in their Elizabethan and unfamiliar sense a large number of words which seem so familiar that there is no incentive to look for them in the glossary. It is hoped that a glossary arranged as below will make it easy to see at a glance what words and phrases in any particular scene require elucidation. A number of phrases are glossed by what seems to be, in their context, the modern equivalent rather than by lexicographical glosses on the words which compose them.

## Act First

### SCENE I

*line*

- 1 AFFECTED, favoured
- 6 CURIOSITY, scrutiny of
- 7 MOIKTY, share
- 11 BRAZED, hardened
- 12 CONCEIVE, understand
- 32 OUT, abroad
- 36 DARKER, hitherto concealed
- 65 CHAMPAINS, rich plains
- 77 FELICITATE, happy
- 81 HEREDITARY, heirs
- 113 FROM WHOM, by whose influence

*line*

- 115 PROPERTY, relationship
- 118 GENERATION, children
- 125 NURSERY, care
- 137 ADDITIONS, ceremonial due
- 145 FORK, head
- 160 BLANK, 'bull's eye'
- 208 ELECTION MAKES NOT UP, choice cannot be made
- 217 ARGUMENT, theme
- 282 PLEATED, folded
- 304 HIT TOGETHER, act in concert

### SCENE II

- 3 STAND IN THE PLAGUE OF CUSTOM, suffer the disabilities enforced by convention
- 4 CURIOSITY, fastidiousness

- 24 SUBSCRIBED, transferred
- 25 EXHIBITION, maintenance
- 26 GAD, spur (of the moment)
- 44 ESSAY, trial

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## Act I Sc. ii—continued

line	line
48 FOND, foolish	125 SPHERICAL, of the spheres ( <i>i.e.</i> the planets)
98-9 WIND ME INTO HIM, gain his confidence ('me' is 'etbic' dative)	129 GOATISH, lascivious
120 EXCELLENT FOPPERY, last word in affectation	131 DRAGON, the constellation Draco
	152 SECTARY ASTRONOMICAL, student of astrology
	184 PRACTICES, schemes

## SCENE IV

2 DEFUSE, confuse	207 TENDER, securing
4 RAZ'D, disguised	WEAL, well-being
31 CURIOUS, elaborate	213 IT, its
45 CLOTPOLE, dolt	249 BESORT, besit
52 ROUNDEST, abruptest	279 DEROGATE, degenerate
53 A, he	282 THWART, perverse
66 FAINT, languid	284 CADENT, falling
86 DIFFERENCES, 'your place'	FRET, cut
185 MAKES THAT FRONTLET, means that (frowning) brow	299 UNTENTED, uncleansed
196 SHEALED PEASCOD, shelled pea- pod	300 FOND, foolish
205 ALLOWANCE, sanction	324 BUZZ, rumour
	344 ATTASK'D, blamed

## SCENE V

9 KIBES, sores	15 CRAB, crab-apple
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## Act Second

### SCENE I

6 BUSSING, kissing ( <i>i.e.</i> just touch- ing)	17 THING OF A QUEASY QUESTION, ticklish design
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## GLOSSARY

## Act II Sc. i—continued

line		line	
55	GASTED, made aghast	107	PRACTICE, treachery
65	FIGHT, determined	112	IN MY STRENGTH, with my authority
78	TUCKET, flourish of trumpets	124	FROM, away from
80	PORTS, gates ( <i>or possibly in the modern sense</i> )		

## SCENE II

14	THREE-SUITED, with (only) three suits	74	RENEGE, deny
16	ACTION-TAKING, litigious	86	LIKES, pleases
	GLASS, mirror	99	DUCKING, bowing OBSERVANTS, sycophants
23	ADDITION, title	100	NICELY, punctiliously
31	CULLIONLY, rascally	114	CONJUNCT, taking his part
35	CARBONADO, slash (of meat before broiling)	119	FLESHMENT, excitement ('flesbed = 'having tasted blood')
43	FLESH, draw blood	121	THEIR FOOL, a fool compared to them (in their own opinion)
61	UNBOLTED, unsifted ( <i>i.e.</i> coarse)	150	RUBB'D, impeded
63	JAKES, privy		
71	INTRINSE, intricate		

## SCENE III

10	ELF, tangle	18	PELTING, petty
11	PRESENTED, exposed	19	BANS, curses

## SCENE IV

7	CREWEL, worsted ( <i>pun on 'cruel'</i> )	33	SPITE OF INTERMISSION, in spite of the fact that he was inter- rupting
11	NETHER-STOCKS, stockings	34	PRESENTLY, at once
30	BEKKING POST, sweating mes- senger		

# KING LEAR

## Act II Sc. iv—continued

line	line
35 MEINY, company	208 WAGE, contend
41 DISPLAY'D, behaved	215 SUMPTER, pack-horse
54 TELL, count ( <i>with pun on dolours</i> <i>(dollars) in line above</i> )	223 EMBOSSED, come to a head
55 MOTHER, hysteria	244 SLACK, be slack, in attendance on
87 FETCHES, excuses	255 WELL-FAVOUR'D, good-looking
104 OFFICE, duty	264 ARE . . . SUPERFLUOUS, have more than the bare minimum
112 REMOTION, keeping aloof	265 ALLOW NOT, if you do not allow
115 PRESENTLY, at once	283 FLAWS, fragments
120 COCKNEY, squeamish woman	299 RUFFLE, bluster
174 SIZES, allowances ( <i>cf. 'sizar'</i> )	

## Act Third

### SCENE I

4 ELEMENT, weather	26 PACKINGS, intrigues
12 CUB-DRAWN, sucked dry	29 FURNISHINGS, trappings
18 NOTE, knowledge	39 FLAIN, complain
26 SNUFFS, quarrels	

### SCENE II

3 COCKS, weather-cocks	18 SUBSCRIPTION, loyalty
5 VAUNT-COURIERS, fore-runners ( <i>avant-couriers</i> )	29 LOUSE, be infested with lice
8 GERMINS, seeds	44 GALLOW, terrify
	54 SIMULAR, posing

### SCENE IV

58 TAKING, malignant charming	107 UNACCOMMODATED, untrimmed
67 PENDULOUS, hanging above	116 WEB, } diseases of the eye
98 PLACKET, hole in petticoat	117 PIN, }

# GLOSSARY

## Act III Sc. iv—*continued*

*line*

- 117 SQUINIES, makes to squint  
120 'OLD, wold  
124 AROINT, avaunt!  
130 TODPOLE, tadpole  
WATER, *sc.* newt

*line*

- 132 GALLETTS, salads  
134 TITHING, district  
138 DEER, beasts  
181 CHILDE, young noble awaiting  
knighthood

## SCENE V

- 10 APPROVES, proves  
INTELLIGENT, 'in the know'

- 18 APPREHENSION, seizing

## SCENE VI

- 5 DESERVE, requite  
39 BENCH, sit  
45 MINIKIN, dainty  
69 BRACH, bitch  
70 TRUNDLE-TAIL, with curled tail  
73 HATCH, half-door

- 74 WAKES, funeral feasts  
75 HORN, beggar's bowl  
76 ANATOMIZE, dissect  
107 SUFFERANCE, suffering  
109 PORTABLE, bearable

## SCENE VII

- 10 FESTINANT, swift  
17 QUESTRISTS, seekers  
29 CORKY, withered  
39 QUICKEN, come to life  
40 HOSPITABLE FAVOURS, face of  
your host  
54 COURSE, a 'round' in bear-  
baiting

- 58 RASH, thrust  
59 LOW'D, bowed  
61 STELLED, starry  
63 DERNE, dire  
98 UNTIMELY, inopportunately  
104 ROGUISH, wild



# KING LEAR

## Act Fourth

### SCENE I

*line*

- 4 ESPERANCE, hope  
37 WANTON, thoughtless  
53 DAUB, dissemble

*line*

- 63 MOPPING AND MOWING, grimacing  
69 SUPERFLUOUS, sated  
70 STANDS, withstands

### SCENE II

- 13 UNDERTAKE, act  
24 CONCEIVE, take my meaning  
42 HEAD-LUGG'D, baited  
56 NOISELESS, peaceful

- 60 PROPER, *i.e. to the fiend*  
62 SELF-COVER'D, with real self concealed  
68 MEW, put off (*from bird moulting*)

### SCENE III

- 44 CASUALTIES, chances

- | 51 DEAR, important

### SCENE IV

- 3 FUMITER, fumitory  
4 HOR-DOCKS, (?) white dock  
14 SIMPLES, medicinal herbs

- | 17 REMEDIATE, remedial  
26 IMPORTANT, importunate  
27 BLOWN, puffed up

### SCENE V

- 25 OEILLADES, glances (of the eye)

# GLOSSARY

## SCENE VI

<i>line</i>		<i>line</i>	
14	GROSS, large	120	MINCES VIRTUE, is affectedly virtuous
15	SAMPIRE, a herb used in pickles (mentioned by Drayton as growing well near Dover)	122	FITCHEW, pole-cat SOILED, over-fed
19	COCK, cock-boat	130	CIVET, perfume
39	SNUFF, 'fag-end'	138	SQUINY, squint
42	CONCEIT, imagination	145	CASE, socket
53	AT EACH, end to end	161	BEADLE, constable
57	BOURN, limit	169	ABLE, vouch for
58	SHRILL-GORGED, shrill-throated	192	NATURAL, by birth
63	BEGUILE, cheat	195	SECONDS, supporters
71	WHELK'D, twisted	212	VULGAR, of common report
81	SAFER, saner ACCOMMODATE, 'get up'	242	VOR, warn
82	HIS, its	243	COSTARD, head BALLOW, club
87	PRESS-MONEY, 'King's shilling'	278	RAKE UP, scantily bury ( <i>i.e.</i> rake the ground over) POST, go-between
88	CROW-KEEPER, crow-scarer ( <i>or</i> possibly scare-crow)	281	DEATH-PRACTIS'D, whose death was plotted
91	BROWN BILLS, pikes	283	STIFF, insensitive
117	LUXURY, lust	284	INGENIOUS, conscious
119	FORKS, legs		

## SCENE VII

7	WEEDS, garments	61	POND, crazed
9	SHORTENS, leaves inadequate time for	66	MAINLY, entirely
17	WIND UP, tune	67	SKILL, reason
25	TEMPERANCE, sanity	81	EVEN O'ER, recall
31	FLAKES, locks of hair	97	POINT, aim PERIOD, goal
36	PERDU, a sentry placed in a perilous position		

# KING LEAR

## Act Fifth

### SCENE I

*line*

4 CONSTANT, determined  
6 DOUBTED, suspected  
11 FORFENDED, forbidden  
31 QUESTION, to be debated

*line*

32 ANCIENT OF WAR, veterans  
50 O'ERLOOK, look through  
69 STANDS ON ME, it is incumbent  
on me

### SCENE III

49 OF, on to  
50 IN OUR EYES, against us  
69 COMPEERS, equals  
83 ATTAINT, impeachment  
122 COPE, encounter  
129 MAUGRE, despite

150 PRACTICE, trickery  
154 STOPPLE, put the bung in  
203 PERIOD, stopping-point  
274 FALCHION, sword  
280 THIS IS A DULL SIGHT, my eyes  
are dim



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